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Saipan Tribune

Senate says it supports unlimited air services from China. PAGE 3

'We are operating without a trial date' PAGE 4

Water sanitary survey finds water tanks overflowing

FERDIE DE LA TORRE
Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Water/Wastewater Division deputy director Kevin Watson gestures as he discusses, among other things, the findings of a sanitary water survey, during a regular CUC board meeting yesterday.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Water/Wastewater Division deputy director Kevin Watson disclosed

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Torres: We will learn from this

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Although it remains unclear how an inmate escaped from the Commonwealth Health Center last Wednesday evening with two Department of Corrections officers on guard, DOC Commissioner Anthony Torres has taken the incident as a lesson to learn from and an opportunity to improve moving forward.

See TORRES on Page 4

Torres

Maratita

Hong Kong Airlines' return just around the corner

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The return of Hong Kong Airlines is fast approaching with the carrier now in the final stages of preparation before it makes its awaited comeback this March.

In a press conference with Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepcion, he shared that based on communications with Hong Kong Airlines, MVA learned that final conversations are ongoing

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Sea turtle shot with speargun off Smiling Cove

CAREY DEMAPAN
The juvenile green sea turtle was shot with a spear gun and killed off the waters of Smiling Cove Marina last Sunday.

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

A juvenile green sea turtle succumbed to a wound inflicted by a speargun last Sunday off the waters of Smiling Cove Marina.

The Department of Land and Natural Resources Sea Turtle

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INSIDE

SUPPLEMENT
The Saipan Chamber of Commerce will fete its best of the year during its Annual Business Person of the Year Gala tomorrow.
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Barely 400,000 votes have been cast in two rural GOP primaries, but Donald Trump and Joe Biden are behaving like their parties' nominees already.
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Bravo to the nominees for the
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FROM THE MANAGEMENT & STAFF OF
Hafa Adai! Saipan Tribune
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Local

DPW inspectors find former wax museum building unsafe

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The Department of Public Works' Building Safety Code Division has found the former Wax Museum of Saipan building in western Garapan to be an unsafe structure.

Yumul

Yvonne B. Tenorio, who is the acting DPW Building Safety official, informed the owner of the former Max Museum Wednesday about the results of their inspection of the building.

DPW Secretary Ray N. Yumul agreed with Tenorio's letter, which was addressed to So Boo Kim, president of Kanishima Group of Company.

Tenorio said the Building Safety Code inspectors performed a site inspection of the building on Dec. 19, 2023, and saw that the metal sections that hold the exterior walls in place are in an advanced stage of corrosion.

Tenorio said the metal brackets are unable to continue maintaining the stability to the walls.

She also noted the definition of an unsafe structure pursuant to the NMI Administrative Code.

See DPW on Page 4

EARTHQUAKE BRIEFS

4.8-magnitude earthquake in Dededo

At 11:36pm on Jan. 25 2024, a report of a 4.8-magnitude earthquake occurred in Dededo Village, Guam. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

6.2-magnitude earthquake in Pagan

At 1:48am on Jan. 21 2024, a report of a 6.2-magnitude earthquake occurred in the Pagan region, Northern Mariana Islands. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

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IN LETTER TO US DOT

Senate says it supports unlimited air services from China

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

The CNMI Senate has sent to the U.S. Department of Transportation a letter of support for the reinstatement of a provision of the U.S.-China Air Transport Agreement, stating that the airlines of the People's Republic of China may provide unlimited scheduled air services between the People's Republic of China and Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands.

The Senate's letter also supports the Commonwealth Ports Authority's request for U.S. DOT to exempt the CNMI from federal limitations on scheduled Chinese air service from China to the CNMI.

DeLeon Guerrero

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) wrote the letter dated Jan. 18, 2024 and addressed to DOT secretary Pete Buttigieg.

DeLeon Guerrero wrote to Buttigieg that with no U.S. airline providing scheduled passenger service between China and the CNMI and no other economic industry present to support employment, commercial activity, and government revenues, the imminent collapse of the tourism industry will have repercussions for the future of the CNMI that will last for years.

She said the U.S.-China Air Transport Agreement of 2007 states the desires of both the U.S. and China to increase travel and tourism between their countries, promote liberalization of their transport market, and facilitate cooperative agreements between their air carriers.

The president said Article 6 of the 2007 Agreement created a new Annex 6 that also stated that the airlines of the U.S. may provide unlimited scheduled air services between three points in the PRC and Guam and the NMI.

The points selected by the U.S. in the PRC shall not include either Beijing or Shanghai.

The U.S. shall notify the PRC in writing of the points it has selected with at least a 30 days' advance notice.

The points selected may be changed at the discretion of the U.S. with no less than 30 days' written notice.

Annex 6 also stated that air services provided shall not be subject to limitations as to the number of designations or frequencies.

DeLeon Guerrero said pursuant to Annex 6, Chinese carriers gradually increased air service to the CNMI since 2007 and the Chinese tourists comprised about 40% of the total tourist market by 2018.

She said subsequently, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted air transportation and both the U.S. and China restricted international flights to and from their countries.

The U.S. DOT suspended all Chinese air carriers operating from China to the U.S. on June 16, 2020. China resumed its internationals passenger flights on Dec. 30, 2022.

Subsequently, the U.S. DOT authorized 12 flights per week from China to the U.S. on May 23, 2023, increased the flights to 18 flights per week on Aug. 11, 2023, further increased the flights per week by Oct. 29, 2023.

DeLeon Guerrero said, however, the limited number of authorized China to U.S. flights per week makes it difficult for the CNMI to compete against destinations like Los Angeles and New York, and therefore, CPA is requesting an exemption from the flight limitations.

She noted that as highlighted by CPA, the direct impact of losing the Chinese tourism market based on the year 2019 number of Chinese visitors is approximately $126.4 million and the direct economic impact loss is $204.7 million, for a total of $331.2 million economic impact loss for the year.

The president said the direct economic impact loss of $126.4 million from the Chinese tourism market represents almost half of the CNMI's pre-pandemic general revenues each year.

DeLeon Guerrero noted that this revenue shortfall made it impossible for CNMI government to fully fund its personnel and operations for fiscal years 2023 and 2024.

She said the loss of Chinese visitors to the CNMI impacts all sectors of the economy including the hotels and resorts.

Gas prices up 10 cents

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
At around 4:15pm last Wednesday, Mobil Oil Marianas implemented a 10-cent increase in its fuel prices.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

The CNMI saw its first fuel price increase of the year, with Mobil Oil Marianas leading the way by raising its prices late Wednesday afternoon by 10 cents.

Mobil Oil Marianas implemented the 10-cent increase at around 4:15pm Wednesday. Shell Marianas is expected to follow the rise in gas prices.

With the increase, Mobil now charges $5.36 per gallon for its Extra fuel, up from $5.26. Mobil also increased its Supreme fuel from $5.71 per gallon to $5.81 while diesel is now $5.73 per gallon.

This comes after months of gradual decreases in fuel prices, the last of which was back in December 2023, when gas prices went down from $5.36 per gallon to $5.26.

Since the end of September 2023, fuel prices have been seeing a steady, continuous drop.

The downtrend came after a string of increases.

Since this is the first increase of the year, it is still too early to determine the trend in fuel prices.

According to a local gas attendant, it's normal to see a string of increases in the beginning of the year as people return from the holiday season and more cars return to the road.

A 30-year-old motorist said she just hopes gas prices don't get ridiculously high this year.

"I think everyone expected gas prices to increase sometime. I just hope prices don't get too high as people are still struggling," she said.

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‘We are operating without a trial date’

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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REPORTER

Despite the criminal lawsuit filed against former governor Ralph DLG Torres approaching its second-year anniversary, there is still no clear trial date set.

In a previous interview with assistant attorney general James Kingman, he shared that to date, there still isn’t a clear trial date set in Torres’ original criminal case.

“In the ongoing criminal case, we don’t have a trial date, we have not had a scheduling order, we’ve provided the court our available dates multiple times, we’ve got an outstanding ruling or two and there hasn’t been any sort of movement.,” he said.

Torres has been vacated numerous times with the most recent trial date being June 5. However, after the June 5 status conference, Superior Court judge pro tem Arthur Barcinas has yet to schedule a trial date in this case.

The OAG filed its criminal suit against Torres back in April 2022.

According to the complaint against Torres, the first two counts of misconduct in public office goes back to April 12, 2018, when Torres allegedly issued himself and his wife first-class airline tickets paid for by local funds.

“On or about April 12, 2018, on Saipan, Torres, while being governor of the CNMI, violated 1 CMC $ 7407(f) in that he caused to be issued airline tickets for business class, first class, or other premium class travel for himself [and Diann Torres] using Commonwealth funds, in violation of and made punishable by 6 CMC $ 3202,” the complaint stated.

Torres allegedly repeated these violations on June 8, July 11, Aug. 13, Aug.t 16, Sept. 25, Nov. 15, Nov. 27, and Dec. 18, 2018, making up the remaining 10 counts of misconduct in public office.

Aside from 12 counts of misconduct, the OAG also charged Torres with theft for the same violations.

Lastly, the OAG is accusing Torres of contempt for his failure to comply with the House Committee on Judiciary & Governmental Operations’ subpoena on Dec. 10, 2021.

The court has since dismissed the contempt charge against Torres.

Kingman, last year, filed a new case charging Torres with contempt anew but that case has yet to move forward as Torres’ defense team has argued that he is constitutionally entitled to a probable cause hearing.

The parties were ordered to file a brief regarding the argument and are scheduled to return to court on Feb. 29 for a hearing on the matter.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Attorney Joaquin Torres, left, and former governor Ralph DLG Torres leave Superior Court judge *pro tem* Arthur Barcinas’ courtroom following a recent court hearing.

AIRLINES

From page 1

between the airlines and its partners to finalize the promotion of these flights expected to launch sometime in March.

“We’re still in close communication with stakeholders for Hong Kong Airlines’ flight. From my understanding, they’re still working out some discussion points between the airline, travel agencies, and tour operators who are going to be promoting these flights and selling tickets for these flights.

Concepcion said based on conversations with the airline, the new tentative launch date is March. It was previously reported that Hong Kong Airlines expected to relaunch its Hong Kong- Saipan flights mid-February.

“As of today, the tentative launch is going to be on March, towards the mid or later half of March so that’s very exciting news. I’ll leave it to the airline itself to make the final announcement of when they’ll officially be flying to Saipan. But we’re very excited that Hong Kong Airlines is returning to Saipan four years later,” he said.

Hong Kong Airlines suspended its Hong Kong-Saipan flights back in 2020 and have decided that they’re coming back.

“The flights will be twice a week, A330 Aircraft which is 280 seats per flight. That’s a good number,” Concepcion said.

Concepcion said MVA is optimistic that Hong Kong Airlines will further boost the CNMI’s tourism industry as there is a pent-up demand to travel in the area.

“Hong Kong Airlines is looking at a 12-month program but these things usually extend depending on the success or failure of the flights but we think it’s just right to restart this market. There’s a pent-up demand for people in the Hong Kong area to travel and we are the closest U.S. destination to East Asia so we are in a good position to capture a nice portion of that market,” he said.

The launch of Hong Kong Airlines couldn’t come at a better time with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security ruling on the establishment of the CNMI Economic Vitality & Security Travel Authorization Program which is specific to Chinese tourists.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

TURTLE

From page 1

Conservation Program and the Division of Fish and Wildlife’s Enforcement Division responded to the incident. The turtle was then taken to be assessed and treated; however, later succumbed to its fatal wound.

Carey Demapan, Endangered Species Program manager at DLNR, has this message to the community: “If you have any information on this incident, please report it to the DLNR Main Office, DFW Enforcement, or through our social media pages. Sea turtles are protected under local and federal laws. They provide valuable benefits to our ecosystems, most especially our marine environments. If you are interested in learning more about turtles, please contact our office to schedule learning opportunities.”

Green sea turtles are protected federally under the Endangered Species Act and locally under CNMI Public Law 02-51; therefore, any harassment or take of sea turtles of any size class is against the law. According to Demapan, fines and penalties if caught endangering sea turtles can go up to $25,000 per offense and up to six months jail time.

When asked how often reports of this kind are made, Depaman said it rarely occurs, but that human-caused threats such as illegal harvesting, boat strikes, and net entanglement are more common.

If you have any tips or would like to report any sea turtle nesting, hatching, strandings, or unlawful take, reach out to the Sea Turtle Conservation Program at (670) 322-9830/34 or message CNMI Sea Turtle Program directly on Facebook or Instagram. You may also contact the Division of Fish and Wildlife Enforcement team at (670) 664-6000.

TORRES

From page 1

At around 8pm last Wednesday evening, Joey Maratita—a man who was arrested last Friday for charges related to the unauthorized entry incident at the Chacha Oceanview Middle School last week—escaped from under the noses of two DOC officers while he was being medically treated at CHC.

Fortunately, at around 11:59pm, Maratita was located and detained by DOC officers at the Old Japanese Jail in Gualo Rai unharmed.

DOC commissioner Torres did not disclose what Maratita was brought to CHC for in the first place, but he did state that he has since been medically cleared from CHC allowing his return to DOC where he now remains under isolation.

Torres said currently, an investigation remains ongoing on the events of Wednesday evening that led to Maratita’s escape.

“Maratita fled from CHC through from the emergency room. How it happened is still pending investigation so I cannot comment on it yet. There’s still an investigation going on especially since this is a big deal,” he said.

Torres, looking on the bright side, said this incident will serve as a learning experience for DOC, and other local law enforcement agencies that aided in the search for Maratita.

“The collaboration and the joint effort between agencies was great. DPS’ patrol and K-9 units come out to assist. We even had help from the U.S. Marshals Service, other law enforcement agencies, and I also came out with my staff to help in the search for the inmate. I’m going to call for an after-action meeting sometime next week to look at some of the things [we can improve on] with our other partners because this is something that if another emergency like this happens, we need to know what our options are. There is always room for improvement,” he said.

One of the good things that came out of the incident, Torres shared, was the opportunity for law enforcement agencies to come together and work with one another during the search.

“I will say, for something like this to happen and have everybody come together collaboratively is how we should be as a Commonwealth. We should be working together in times of crisis. Unfortunately, things like this happen even in other areas of the world. This is something we can learn from,” he said.

Now that Maratita is back under DOC custody, *Saipan Tribune* learned that the inmate could possibly be facing additional charges in relation to his escape.

As for the DOC officers who were in charge of Maratita last Wednesday evening, Torres said he could not disclose what actions would be taken against them, if any at all, as there is still a pending investigation.

WATER

From page 1

yesterday that with the operational changes they have implemented on Saipan they are projecting that over 100 million gallons of water per month will be saved and their non-revenue water will decrease from 65% to around 47%.

Watson disclosed during CUC’s regular board meeting that Saipan’s non-revenue water for December was 65% and this level is expected to drop due to a change in operating procedures to prevent water tanks from overflowing.

» Constant monitoring of water tanks to prevent overflow will save over 100M gallons of water per month

» 65% non-revenue water will be down to 47%

He said based from their calculations and known savings because of the operational change that went in effect Dec. 21, 2023, they have already noticed that just the first 10 days, a savings of 50 million gallons of water in December.

“We’ve been producing about 300 million gallons of water. So that’s going to reduce that by a third. And we sell customers about 100 million gallons,” he said.

Watson said the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality conducted a water sanitary survey last December, in which they inspected a large percentage of CUC’s water wells and all water tanks on Saipan.

Watson discussed the findings of the survey, including four to five water reservoirs that were overflowing.

“So that was a really big eye opener. And the reason for that is that what [CUC] staff had been trying for years was [to keep] 24- hour water. So, their priority was to keep the reservoirs as full as they can so the customers continue to get water and have a good pressure,” he said.

Watson said, however, when people stop using that water after 5, 6 o’clock, and they keep the wells running, the tanks would possibly overflow.

He said after the survey’s finding, they start monitoring the water levels and then their operators drive multiple times to all the tanks every day.

Watson said when it’s evening, they would shut off the wells because they know that people don’t use water that much, then turn them on first thing in the morning.

He said they revisit all the tanks to make sure they stay within level.

Watson said right now they are working on a technology to address the issue.

DPW

From page 2

The Wax Museum of Saipan, a two-floor museum located on Ginger Street, opened in November 2006. It’s unclear when the museum closed business.

During its opening, the museum consisted of over 15 display areas.

The first room contains a diorama of a Taga hut, a collection of historical photographs, and two life-size waxworks of Halloween figures: Frankenstein and the Werewolf.

The second floor had a room showing all the past and present governors and lieutenant governors of the CNMI. It also had an exhibit room that served as a gallery of paintings.

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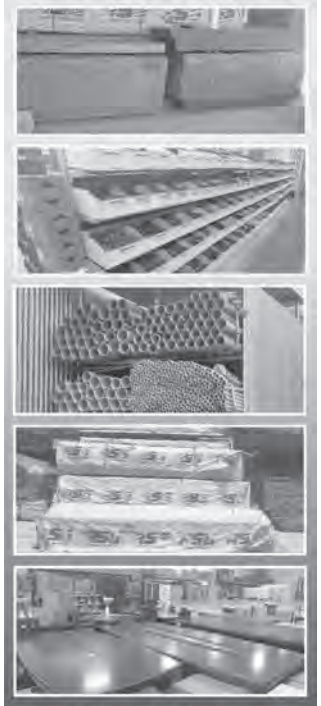
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CHCC provides update on Health Network Program

The Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. said CNMI residents who are seeking full assistance under the Health Network Program must satisfy three main eligibility criteria—medical, residency, and income.

Strict adherence to regulations pertaining to program eligibility based on these criteria has played a pivotal role in achieving a substantial decrease in the number of referrals.

However, CNMI residents who do not satisfy all three criteria can still avail support from HNP, formerly known as the Medical Referral Program. Those with a valid Medical Treatment Authorization seeking medical care or treatment unavailable in the Commonwealth, as per program guidelines, can connect with the program for aid in ground transportation (in Guam and Hawaii) and assistance in coordinating self-arranged appointments.

For instance, HNP staff are able to assist clients who are outside of the program connect with Mercy Medical for complimentary airfare or Hope Lodge, which offers free lodging to cancer patients in Hawaii who meet the criteria.

"Our goal is to ensure efficiency driven by a commitment to place the patient at the center" said Tiffany Crisostomo, chief of Business and Quality Assurance. "Recognizing that no one desires a medical referral journey, we believe that ease is not just a preference, but a compassionate necessity."

Individuals who may not receive complete assistance from the HNP are strongly encouraged to connect with the program. The HNP facilitates connections between patients, helps in scheduling appointments, and provides access to low-cost or free services beyond the CNMI.

Under CHCC's management of the referral program, significant milestones have been reached. A crucial strategic shift in HNP's approach to airline bookings was necessary. By directly engaging with airlines rather than relying on travel agencies for air transportation bookings, HNP has significantly reduced costs by $300-$600 per ticket with direct bookings.

In efforts to enhancing patient experience, HNP shifted away from processing and mailing checks for subsistence allowance, and now provide patients with a debit card for immediate fund uploads, streamlining financial transactions and enhancing convenience.

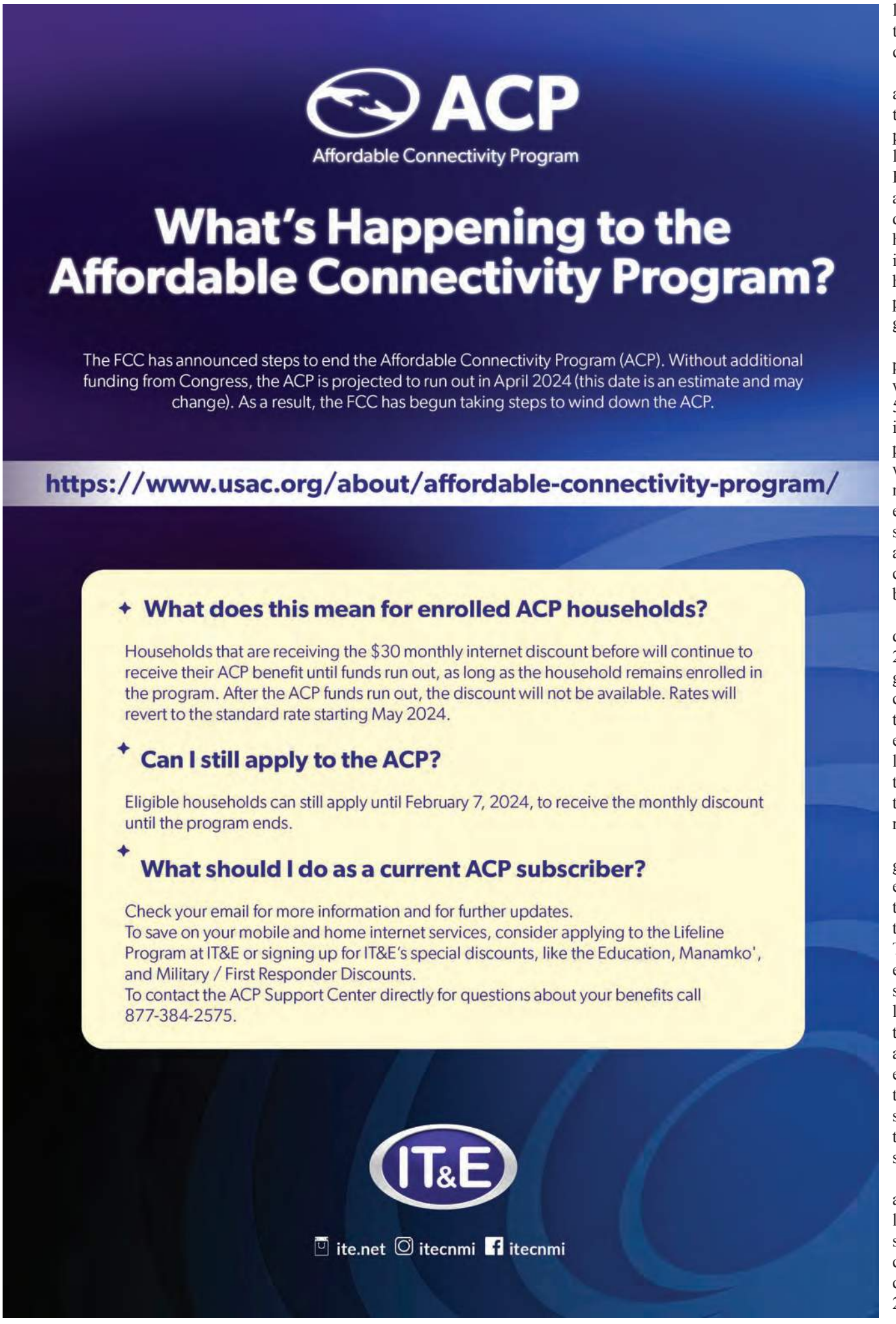
The HNP's innovative approach extends to ground transportation as well. By partnering with companies like Yellow Cab, UBER, and Happy to Help car services and eliminating a single vendor, HNP has not only enhanced flexibility in addressing timely appointments but have also achieved an impressive 70% reduction in ground transportation costs.

Additionally, HNP phased out blocked rooms which has resulted in a 50% reduction in lodging expenses, allowing the program to redirect funds where they are needed most. Also, HNP leverages alternative resources, such as organizations and accommodations providing cost-free services to eligible individuals.

These reductions are evident when compared to the 2019 figures when the program operated under the central government. In 2019, the referral program incurred expenditures of approximately $16.9 million. Contrasting this with the fiscal year 2023, the program's expenses were reduced to about $5.7 million.

"The HNP continues to engage with healthcare providers through regular calls and the expansion of our network to include the Philippines, Taiwan, and Korea showcases our dedication to fostering strong relationships globally," Crisostomo said. "This transformative journey is an adjustment to many; however, it reflects our dedication to creating a healthcare system that seamlessly integrates efficiency, compassion, and cost-effectiveness."

For more information about CHCC programs, follow them on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter at @cnmichcc; visit https://www.chcc.health; or call (670) 234-8950. ***(PR)***


ACP
Affordable Connectivity Program
What's Happening to the Affordable Connectivity Program?
The FCC has announced steps to end the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP). Without additional funding from Congress, the ACP is projected to run out in April 2024 (this date is an estimate and may change). As a result, the FCC has begun taking steps to wind down the ACP.
https://www.usac.org/about/affordable-connectivity-program/
What does this mean for enrolled ACP households?
Households that are receiving the $30 monthly internet discount before will continue to receive their ACP benefit until funds run out, as long as the household remains enrolled in the program. After the ACP funds run out, the discount will not be available. Rates will revert to the standard rate starting May 2024.
Can I still apply to the ACP?
Eligible households can still apply until February 7, 2024, to receive the monthly discount until the program ends.
What should I do as a current ACP subscriber?
Check your email for more information and for further updates.
To save on your mobile and home internet services, consider applying to the Lifeline Program at IT&E or signing up for IT&E's special discounts, like the Education, Manamko', and Military / First Responder Discounts.
To contact the ACP Support Center directly for questions about your benefits call 877-384-2575.
IT&E
ite.net itecnmi itecnmi

MCS celebrates 'Catholic Schools Week 2024'

Mount Carmel School kindly invites her students, parents, guardians, faculty, staff, and community partners to join in her annual celebration of Catholic Schools Week from Sunday, Jan. 28, to Friday, Feb. 2, 2024.

Catholic Schools Week is a national week-long celebration where Catholic schools throughout the U.S. commemorate the rich and impactful legacy of Catholic education in this country. Schools focus on the value Catholic education provides to young people and its contributions to our church, our communities, and our nation.

This year's theme for CSW is "Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community." As such, each day throughout this week highlights a specific stakeholder within our campus community.

The theme and activities for each day are:

■ Friday, Jan. 26: Proclamation Signing Ceremony: School stakeholders and Gov. Arnold I. Palacios will convene at the Mount Carmel Cathedral at 9:30am to officially proclaim the upcoming week as Catholic Schools Week in the CNMI.

■ Sunday, Jan. 28: CSW and 40th Diocesan Anniversary Kick-Off Mass: Mount Carmel School will lead the Diocese of Chalan Kanoa's Eucharistic Revival Opening Mass this Sunday at 5pm at the open field near the Joeten Daidai Social Hall. Community members are encouraged to participate. It is advised to bring a chair/mat and an umbrella to provide comfort and protection from the elements.

■ Monday, Jan. 29: Celebrating Community: Our students will be engaged in various hands-on activities to recognize numerous community partners that support and collaborate with MCS. Students will engage in charity work through a donation drive to Karidat as well as service activities such as campus beautification projects.

■ Tuesday, Jan. 30: Celebrating Our Faculty and Staff: MCS will recognize the hard work and dedication of all her faculty and staff. Our school will also proudly announce its Teacher of the Year and Support Staff of the Year on this day!

■ Wednesday, Jan. 31: Celebrating Vocations: Various activities have been arranged for our students to interact with the clergy, deacons, and religious sisters. Students will have the opportunity to listen to their stories, ask questions, play games, and compete in basketball and volleyball!

■ Thursday, Feb. 1: Celebrating Our Nation: Elementary students will participate in a First-Responder Costume parade to celebrate the tireless efforts of those whose sacrifices make our lives and privileges possible. Upper-grade levels will host Live Museums featuring several states of the US to educate each other about the bounties within our nation.

■ Friday, Feb. 2: Celebrating Our Students & Families: The MCS Student Council will be hosting a Family/Student Fun Day with classes, clubs, and local businesses having concession stands and booths for everyone to purchase goodies from and enjoy. Athletic field games will also be happening on the field among other fun activities! Parents and guardians are welcome to campus to partake in this day's festivities!

Mount Carmel School hopes to have you join us in our celebrations for Catholic Schools Week 2024! Please call the MCS Main Office at (670) 234-6184 or email CSW co-chair Zeno Deleon Guerrero, Jr. at zeno.deleonguerrero@mcsknights.com or Keiko Yamagata at keiko.yamagata@mcsknights.com for more information. ***(PR)***

Democrats establish procedures for incumbents, new candidates seeking elective office in '24 polls

The Central Executive Committee of the Democratic Party of the Northern Mariana Islands adopted a resolution on Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024, which establishes a process for the recruitment and nomination of candidates seeking to run under the party's banner in this year's midterm elections.

The resolution outlines the steps by which incumbents can indicate their desire to seek re-election under the party and provides clarification for individuals who might wish to challenge Democratic incumbents.

The resolution states:

1. Incumbent Democrats who submit letters of intent to seek reelection as Democrats by Jan. 31, 2024, shall be entitled to presumptive nominee status.

2. Individuals who wish to challenge an incumbent Democrat for nomination as the Democratic Party candidate for the office held by the incumbent must submit to party chair a petition bearing the signature of not fewer than 50 registered voters of the Northern Marianas on or before Feb. 15, 2024.

3. In the event an incumbent is challenged for the party nomination, the question of which individual shall be the party nominee will be decided by primary election conducted concurrently with the Presidential Preference Primary conducted March 5-12, 2024. Unsuccessful candidates in the primary remain eligible to seek nomination for another office under the Democratic Party banner.

4. All other candidates must submit letters of intent no later than April 2, 2024, to be considered for nomination.

5. Presumptive nominees who have not been challenged for the nomination are confirmed as candidates for their offices upon expiration of the Feb. 15, 2024, deadline.

6. In the event that a presumptive nominee is challenged for the nomination, the unsuccessful candidate(s) in the primary may still submit a letter of intent for another office.

7. Presumptive nominees may not be challenged so long as there is at least one open seat for the office unoccupied by a Democrat in the election district affected.

8. Procedures for the final selection of candidates nominated by the Democratic Party will be announced by the Central Executive Committee on or before April 20, 2024.

Party chair Jonathan Cabrera had the following to say regarding the resolution: "The party has implemented a fair and transparent process for selecting candidates to run in the upcoming elections. I am pleased with the Central Executive Committee's work, and I am looking forward to working with all those wishing to run with us in 2024. Let's build on the work of our incumbents and former elected officials so that we might bring to fruition a safe, healthy, beautiful, sustainable, and truly inclusive Northern Marianas."

To view the resolution in its entirety, visit nmidems on Facebook, or visit www.nmidems.org. The Democratic Presidential Primary will be held from March 5 to 12 on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota, and all registered Democratic voters and supporters are invited to participate. Register as a Democrat today by visiting the party's website, and stay tuned for more details. ***(PR)***

HONDA
CLEARANCE
2023
PILOT
STRENGTH IN EVERY DETAIL
Honda SENSING INCLUDED
Seating for up to 8
Blind Spot Information System w/Cross Traffic Monitor
Starting at
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per paycheck
RECEIVE $2,500
DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE
FREE TINT & ZIEBART UNDERCOATING | ONE YEAR FREE GOLD SERVICE
SPORT / TRAILSPORT / ELITE TRIMS AVAILABLE
Visit us at www.joetenmotors.com • Tel. (670) 234-5562
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SHOWROOM HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 8AM - 5PM • SATURDAY 8AM - 12PM
Like us on Facebook
*Some conditions apply, O.A.C., See dealer for details. Vehicle may not be exactly as shown.
2023 HONDA PILOT SPORT at $48,095 + Doc Fees with 20% down at 6% APR for 78 Months at 26 pay periods per year O.A.C. Deferred financing $47,158.80 while supplies last.

Radewagen attends RMI inauguration of President Hilda Heine

WASHINGTON, D.C.—A crucial House Natural Resources subcommittee hearing Thursday examining Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen's (R-AS) bill to restore self-determination to American Samoa, was followed by a snowstorm grounding most flights out of Washington on Friday, which caused a delay to the start Radewagen's long trip to Majuro.

Connecting in Honolulu with an early morning departure to Majuro and crossing the International Date Line, she arrived in the Marshall Islands' capital shortly after the ceremonies began for the Inauguration of President Hilda Heine and her cabinet, and was delighted to attend.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-AS) poses with Marshall Islands' President Hilda Heine with her husband First Gentleman Tommy Kijiner during the inauguration.

Radewagen attended in her capacities as vice chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee's Subcommittee on the Indo-Pacific, and as a member of the House Natural Resources Committee where she served as chairman of the Indo-Pacific Task Force. She also is a co-chairman of the Congressional Pacific Islands Caucus. Upon arrival at the ceremony, she was announced by the President and greeted with warm applause by Inaugural attendees. Foreign dignitaries in attendance included delegations from Japan, Taiwan, Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the United States. The U.S. delegation was led by Ambassador Chantale Yokmin Wong of the U.S. Asian Development Bank, with Assistant Secretary of the Interior Carmen Cantor, and White House Deputy Assistant to the President Erika Moritsugu, who is Asian American and Pacific Islander Senior Liaison.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-AS) and Marshall Islands' President Hilda Heine with her husband First Gentleman Tommy Kijiner on the evening of the inauguration.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Delegate Uifa'atali Amata Radewagen (R-AS) poses with women of the Bikini Atoll.

"This was a long trip for a short stay," said Radewagen. "But it was important to me because my family lived in the Marshall Islands for four years in the early 1960s, when my father served as the first Pacific Islander appointed as head of government of the Marshall Islands in that period of its association with the United States. Indeed, I am a relative of the President by the marriage of her first cousin Elma to my oldest brother. So, the blood of the Marshall Islands flows through the veins of my nieces and nephew and their children, and I was honored and blessed to attend."

Radewagen expresses her condolences to the people of the Marshall Islands upon the recent passing of Iroij Ambassador Phillip Kemioañ Kabua, as she conveyed personally speaking to outgoing President David Kabua. The late Ambassador Kabua has served in several key positions and repeatedly as an ambassador for the RMI government. ***(PR)***

NORTHERN MARIANAS COALITION AGAINST DOMESTIC & SEXUAL VIOLENCE
P.O. BOX 506689, SAIPAN, MP 96950
PHONE: 670.234.3878

The Northern Marianas Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence's mission is to promote, nourish, and sustain a collective movement against violence. All applicants must be familiar with and agree with NMCADSV's mission to eliminate domestic and sexual violence.

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Position Title: Program Assistant
Salary Range: $10.00/hr to $14.00/hr

Job Summary
The Program Assistant will work with the Executive Director of NMCADSV and its Board to achieve its mission, goals, and objectives. The Program Assistant will support the daily operations of NMCADSV, including support for NMCADSV staff, the Executive Director and/or NMCADSV Board/Members, as assigned.

Duties
- Confers with and reports to the Executive Director
- Assists with the coordination of all NMCADSV activities; including event planning, logistics for NMCADSV and Board meetings, prepartion of materials, and travel logistics
- Provides administrative and clerical support to the Executive Director and the NMCADSV Board of Directors and Members; including receiving calls, receiving and logging mail, and maintaining records, as assigned
- Maintains and manages the NMCADSV membership database
- Assists with finance and operations of the NMCADSV; including daily bookkeeping, vendor relations and record keeping
- Attends all meetings and conference calls, as requested
- Travels to national and inter-island meetings and conferences, as required by the Executive Director
- Oversees the maintenance of office equipment and manages office inventory
- Assists the Executive Director in grants management, including the preparation of application packets and gathering data for reports
- Performs other duties, as assigned

Minimum Qualifications
- High School Diploma, or equivalent
- An agreement with NMCADSV's mission statement and philosophy regarding the elimination of domestic and sexual violence
- Experience in providing clerical and administrative support, including record keeping
- Demonstrated abilities in verbal and written communication
- Proficiency in MS Word and Excel
- Willingness to learn in all areas of NMCADSV operations
- Flexible Schedule
- Must be able to travel

Highly Desired Qualifications
- 1 year of documented experience/work with non-profit organizations or volunteerism
- Own transportation, with documented insurance, registration, and a valid driver's license

To Apply:
A **Resume and Cover Letter** should be submitted on or before 5:00 p.m. on **Friday, February 9, 2024**. Provide a list (not copies) of any certifications and/or awards. Late and incomplete submissions will not be considered.

Submit **resume and cover letter** to alleny@endviolencenmi.org, deliver to NMCADSV's office **(between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.)** at the Marina Heights I Building (2nd Floor, Suite 206) or mail to NMCADSV, P.O. Box 506689, Saipan, MP 96950. (Mailed applications must be postmarked on or before the deadline.) Applicants who are invited for an interview will be asked to bring a copy of their Diploma or equivalent, Police Clearance (within the last 30 days), valid Passport, and a list of references. NMCADSV is an equal opportunity employer. Individuals from under-served communities are encouraged to apply.

This project is 100% supported by federal grants, awarded by the Office on Violence Against Women, U.S. Department of Justice and Grant # G-2301MPSD-VC awarded by the Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this release are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Justice or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
P.O. BOX 501521, SAIPAN, MP 95950
TEL: (670) 322-6537/8 • FAX: (670) 322-6548 • E-MAIL: nmidir@ovrgov.net

PUBLIC NOTICE

FY 2024 SRC 1st General Membership Meeting
January 30, 2024 - 5:00pm
World Resort – Sun Flower Room / Zoom

AGENDA

I. **Call to Order**
II. **Roll Call**
III. **Review and Adoption of Agenda**
IV. **Review and Adoption of FY 2023 SRC & SILC Joint Meeting Minutes of September 21, 2023**
V. **Review of Membership Vacancies/ Reappointments**
- **Vacancies**: Business, Industry and Labor (2 slots); Tinian – Current or Former Recipient – 1 slot).

VI. **Reports**
(a) SRC Chairperson
• Letter to Governor – Requesting for Local Funding Match
• Sub-Committee Chair Appointments
(b) OVR Director
• New Staff – Organizational Chart
• CSNA
• Unified State Plan

VII. **Old Business**
a. Orientation and Training – "Acceptance Campaign"

VIII. **New Business**
IX. **Miscellaneous**
X. **Adjournment**

/s/ **Antonelli M. Rosario, Chairperson**

(This Public Notice is paid for by a Grant from U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (Grant#H126A240078).)

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-ZB-42400037

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 16, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR ZONING BOARD"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO THE ZONING BOARD BY FEBRUARY 9TH, 2024, TO MRS. THERESE OGUMORO VIA EMAIL AT zoningboard@cnmizoning.com

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ THERESE OGUMORO
ADMINISTRATOR, ZONING

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

UOG releases 2024 calendars for fishing, gardening enthusiasts

The University of Guam has released two calendars for 2024, designed to assist the community in keeping track of important dates and providing valuable information related to fishing and gardening in Guam.

The UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant, along with the Guam Green Growth initiative, leads the annual project, connecting the United Nations Sustainability Goals with CHamoru culture. The calendars are available for free while supplies last.

"At UOG, we take pride in crafting practical tools and resources, exemplified by these two calendars. While they serve as handy planners, they go beyond scheduling, offering valuable insights into our diverse fish species and the cherished traditions of family fishing," said UOG president Anita Borja Enriquez.

"Additionally, these calendars provide tips on growing plants and vegetables, fostering an interest in backyard gardening and sustainable food systems. We believe in making learning not just informative but also applicable to real life," President Enriquez added.

Thhighlights members of the island's fishing community with their families. This calendar is a collaborative effort involving Guam EPSCOR, UOG Marine Laboratory, and NSF INCLUDES SEAS Islands Alliance Guam.

Each calendar features tide chart data based out of Apra Harbor and was prepared by the UOG Guam Marine Laboratory. Every month features fishermen with their catch of the day, the scientific name and CHamoru name for each catch, along with sustainability tips for the new year.

The 2024 Guam Grower's Calendar: Fanha'aniyan Manamon Guahan was created in collaboration with Guahan Sustainable Culture. This calendar features a different local fruit or vegetable each month, listing both the English and CHamoru names, characteristics of each crop, and gardening tips for optimal growth. Additionally, the calendar includes tide chart data.

"We invite the community to enjoy our newly released 2024 Guam Tide Chart Calendar and the Guam Grower's Calendar. While you enjoy the fish and plants throughout the year, also learn more about the intrinsic connection between island sustainability and our culture," said Austin Shelton, Director of the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant.

Both calendars were funded by the Governor's Education Assistance and Youth Empowerment Grant Program.

UOG

Gabriella Topasña stands with an employee at Big Hook in Hagatña with the newly released 2024 Guam Tide Chart Calendar.

Where to get the calendars:

■ The 2024 Guam Tide Chart Calendar can be found at Big Hook, GMI Scuba Wholesale, Liquid Soul, Fa'nui, Axe Murderer Tours, Coral Reef Marine Center, MDA, and UOG Sea Grant office.

■ The Guam Grower's Calendar can be found at G3 Makerspace & Innovation Hub at Chamorro Village, as well as Guahan Sustainable Culture. ***(UOG)***

UOG

Gabriella Topasña and Phillip Cruz, Sustainability coordinator for the Center for Island Sustainability, share the 2024 Guam Tide Chart Calendar with an employee at Axe Murderer Tours in Hagatña recently.

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-009

ROTA WATER CAVE ENCLOSURE/ REPLACEMENT OF WOOD STAIRS

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs in Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The project consists, in general, of the installation of a new 2-inch Sch. 40 G.I. Pipes Stairs and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) Public Law 20-61.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **150 calendar days** from the date of award of the contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference followed by a Site Visit is scheduled on **January 24, 2024 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-24-009, Rota Water Cave Enclosure / Replacement of Wood Stairs Project"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Comme cial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 13, 2024**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

A Bid Guarantee of *fifteen percent (15%)* of the total bid price must accompany the bids. The bid guarantee may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety.

A *Payment Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent and a *Performance Bond* of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety Company must be authorized to do business in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). *Bidders are required to submit clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.*

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract. Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered bidders and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on January 26, 2024**, to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email at manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Edgar Tuazon, Project Engineer – via email at edgar.tuazon@cucgov.org and Ms. Christie L. Sablan, Procurement & Supply, Senior Administrative Technician – via email at christie.sablan@cucgov.org

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids for any reason and waive any defects in said bid proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works
ENERGY DIVISION
P.O. Box 500340, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel. Nos. (670) 664-4480 / Fax No. (670) 664-4483 /e-mail: cnmienergy@gmail.com

PUBLIC HEARING:

The Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands Office of the Governor in cooperation with the Department of Public Works/Energy Division Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) will be conducting a public hearing to present the proposed WAP State Plan for Program Year 2024 and is inviting the General Public to attend this important Public Hearing.

The public hearing will be held at the Energy Division office located on Capitol Hill, House No. 1337 on Tuesday, February 13, 2024 at 5:00 p.m. Individuals who are unable to attend the public hearing in person may submit written comments to the Energy Division, Capitol Hill, House No. 1337, Saipan or by e-mail to cnmienergy@gmail.com or by mail to P.O. Box 500340, Saipan, MP 96950 on or before close of business on Wednesday, February 28, 2024.

Copies of the Draft State Plan will be made available at the Energy Division, Capitol Hill, House No. 1337 beginning Friday, January 23, 2024.

For more information, you may contact Thelma B. Inos, Energy Director, at 664- 4480/81 or you may visit the Energy Division Office on Capitol Hill, Monday to Friday, except holidays, and from 07:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

/s/ Ray N. Yumul
Secretary of Public Works

HINEKKUNGUK PUPBLIKU:

I Commonwealth gi Sangkattan na Islas Marianas siha gi Ufisinan Gubietnu yan i ko'operasion i Dipattamentun Che'chu' Pupbliku/Dibision Energy gi Prugråman Asistensian Weatherization (WAP) para u makunduduka hinekkunguk pupbliku ni para u maprisenta i manmaproponi na WAP State Plan para i Prugråman i sakkan 2024 yan ha kumbibida i Pupbliku Henerât para u ma'atendi esti na impottântin Hinekkunguk Henerât.

Ihinekkunguk pupbliku para u makundukta gi Dibision Energy, giya Capitol Hill, Numirun Guma' #1337, gi Måttes, Fibreru 13, 2024 gi oran alas 5:00 gi pupuengi. Todu indibiyuât siha ni ti sumiña umatendi i hinekkunguk henerât siña muna'halum tinigi' upiñon siha guatu gi Dibision Energy, Capitol Hill, Numirun Guma' 1337, Saipan pat i email guatu gi cnmienergy@gmail.com pat na'hånåo i kattåm-mu guatu gi P.O. Box 500340, Saipan, MP 96950 gi pat åntis di u mahuchum i ufisina gi, Metkoles, Fibreru 28, 2024.

Kopia siha gi Draft State Plan para u mana'guaha gi Dibision Energy, Capitol Hill Numirun Guma' 1337 tinituhun gi Måttes, Fibreru 23, 2024.
Para mås imfotmasion, siña un ågang si Thelma B. Inos, Direktot Energy, gi 664- 4480/81 pat siña un bisita i Ufisinan Dibision Energy giya Capitol Hill, Lunis asta Betnis, fuera di holidays, yan gi oran alas 07:30 gi egga'an asta alas 04:30 gi dispues di talu'åni.

/s/ Ray N. Yumul
Sekritåriun Public Works

ARONGORONGOL TOULAP:

Bwulasiyol Sów Lemelem lólI Commonwealth wól Téél Fáluw kka Faluwasch Efáng Marianas fengál me aliilisil Bwulasiyool Public Works/Energy Division Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) e bwe ayoora eew arongorong reer toulap bwelle e bwe apasa rel pommol WAP State Plan rel Program Year 2024.

Arongorong yeel e bwe fis me rel Energy Division me Capitol Hill, House #1337, wóól Mwaatis, Maischigh 13, 2024, óttol 5:00 p.m.

Schookka rese tawe re bwe fiti arong yeel, e mmwel schagh u bwe iischilong mááfiyómw rel Energy Division, Capitol Hill, House # 1337, Seipél: ngáre e-mail ngáli: cnmienergy@gmail.com me ngáre afanga ngáli P.O. Box 500340, Seipél, MP 96950 wóól me ngáre mmwal igha ebwe tittiló ótool angaang wól Merkulis, Maischigh 28, 2024.

Kkopiyal Draft Plan yeel nge emmwal rebwe bweibwogh me Energy Division, Capitol Hill, House #1337, wóól Bennis, Shóów 23, 2024.

Rel kkapasal, e mmwel ów bwe fafingi ló llemwáár ye Thelma B. Inos, Energy Director, rel 664-4480/81 me ngáre igha u bwe mwette ló rel Bwulasiyol Energy Division ye e llo Capitol hill, Luunis mwette ngáli Bennis, saabw holidays, me ótool 07:30 a.m. ngáli 04:30 p.m.

/s/ Ray N. Yumul
Secretary of Public Works

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
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The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Condemning Hamas terrorists 'with their own words'

The Biden administration continues to pressure Israel to agree to a cease-fire with Hamas. Apparently, President Joe Biden and his foreign policy team have turned a deaf ear to what the terror group's leaders make clear: They have no intention of co-existing peacefully with the Jewish state.

On Monday, the Middle East Media Research Institute released a transcript of a talk this month between a Kuwaiti podcaster and Khaled Mashal, former head of Hamas. The institute, based in Washington, D.C., provides a valuable service by monitoring and translating Arabic speeches, news reports, social media chatter and interviews. "It yields a steady stream of articles and viral video clips," a recent Wall Street Journal commentary noted, "that condemn the region's tyrants, terrorists and two-faced intellectuals with their own words."

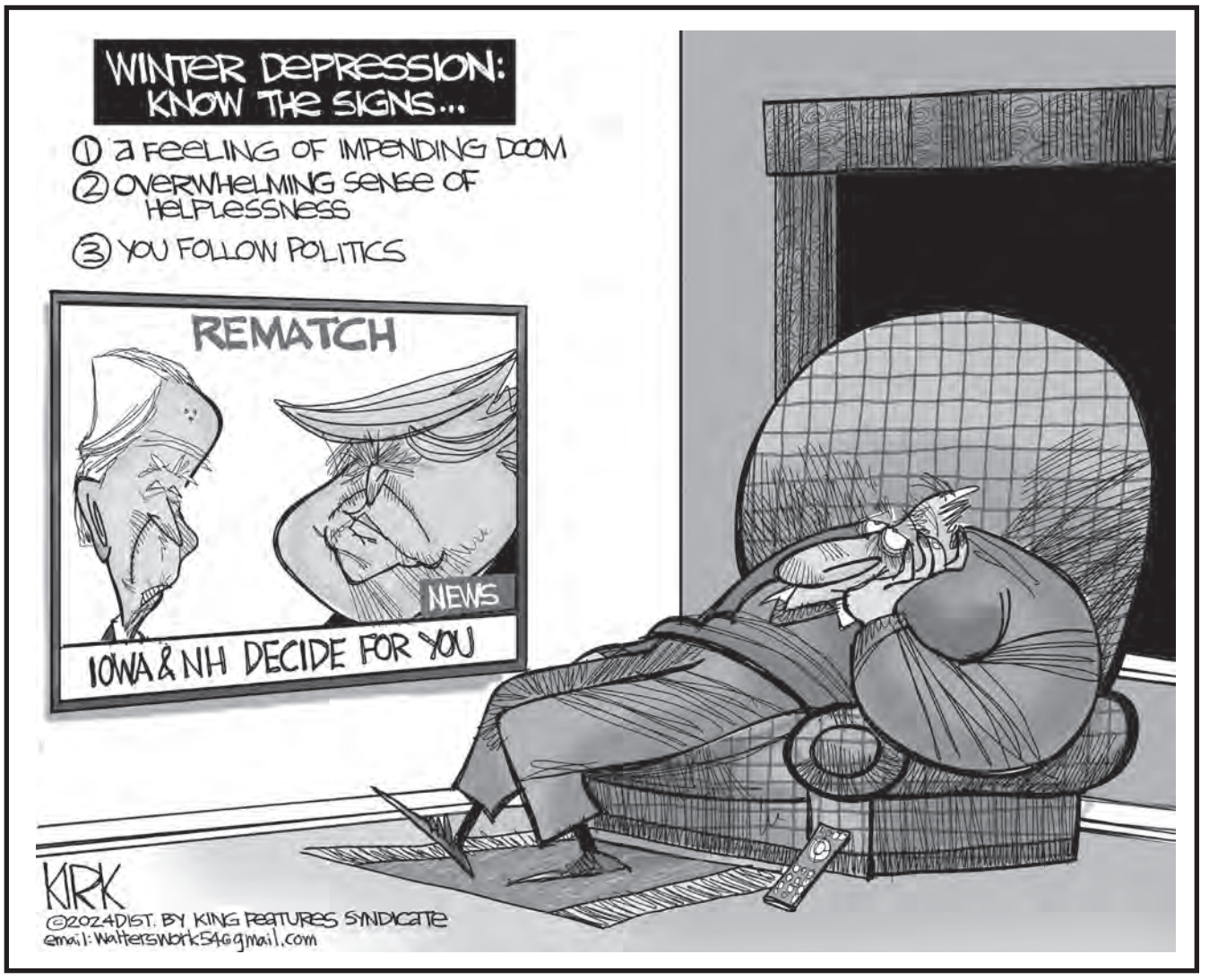
Such is the case with Mashal. He tells his interviewer that Hamas has no interest in a two-state solution that would require Palestinians to live in peace alongside Israel. Moreover, the institute reports, he stated that "taking control of the Gaza Strip following the 2006 elections was necessary in order to build up the resistance, its weapons production and tunnels, without any hindrance from the Palestinian Authority."

Mashal left no doubt about the Hamas outlook. "First, we have nothing to do with the two-state solution," he said during the interview. "We reject this notion, because it means you would get a promise for a state, yet you are required to recognize the legitimacy of the other state, which is the Zionist entity. This is unacceptable."

He also acknowledged that the useful idiots who have taken to the streets in Europe and the United States in support of Hamas terrorists give sustenance to the forces of death and destruction. "Following Oct. 7," Mashal said, "I believe that the dream and the hope for Palestine from the River to the Sea, and from the north to the south, has been renewed. This has also become a slogan chanted in the U.S., and in western capital cities, by the American and western public."

It is against this backdrop that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has come under fire for arguing that a two-state solution to the conflict won't solve his nation's security concerns if Palestinian terrorists remain committed to destroying Israel. Among his critics was U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who said over the weekend that "the refusal to accept the two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians, and the denial of the right to statehood for the Palestinian people, are unacceptable."

See CONDEMNING on Page 11



Warning signs for Trump, even in victory

By CARL P. LEUBSDORF
The Dallas Morning News

Carl P. Leubsdorf is the former Washington bureau chief of the Dallas Morning News. Readers may write to him via email at carl.p.leubsdorf@gmail.com.

With his solid New Hampshire victory, Donald Trump has the Republican nomination within his grasp. But the results showed he faces some big problems down the line—though probably not from rival Nikki Haley,

The former South Carolina governor's final push enabled her to outperform late polls, but she still lost to Trump by double digits. That raised doubts she could beat him elsewhere, though she vowed to press on.

"This race is far from over," Haley claimed Tuesday night, noting the next big contest is Feb. 24 in "my sweet state of South Carolina." She called it "a great night," a comment mocked by Trump. "She lost," he said.

But South Carolina polls show her trailing Trump by more than 20 points, and she may have difficulty sustaining her campaign for the next month.

Meanwhile, though Trump took another big step toward his third consecutive GOP nomination, some aspects of the results illustrated his underlying problems, as did his reaction to them.

Unlike the gracious remarks about his rivals after last week's resounding Iowa caucuses win—and perhaps unsettled by the fact that the outcome was closer than pre-primary polls—he began his comments by mocking her contention she had "a great night."

"She didn't win," he said. "She had a very bad night." He noted he had the support of South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott—standing behind him—though Haley had appointed him to the Senate. "You must really hate her," Trump said. Replied the grinning Scott, "I just love you."

Network exit polls showed continuing resistance to the GOP front-runner among moderate and independent suburban voters, who mostly backed Haley. Self-styled moderates voted for the former South Carolina governor by three to one, and most said they would be dissatisfied by a Trump nomination.

And nearly half the primary voters—including one-fourth of all Republicans—said they would regard Trump as unfit for the presidency if he were convicted of a crime. In Iowa, 31% of GOP voters expressed that concern in last week's caucuses.

To some degree, the responses reflected the fact that the New Hampshire GOP electorate is less conservative than Iowa's. But it also showed that concerns within his own party about the array of indictments facing him could become a significant factor in the general election—if he is convicted.

After all, given the likelihood of another close race next November, even a small drop-off in Trump's Republican support could be fatal to his hopes. It's one reason he is so eager to delay the various trials he faces until after the 2024 election.

And those voter concerns were underscored by a surprisingly candid analysis of the situation by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, just days after he suspended his own campaign and endorsed Trump.

"When I have people come up to me who voted for (former President Ronald) Reagan and have been conservative their whole life say they don't want to vote for Trump again, that's a problem," DeSantis said in an interview with conservative radio host Steve Deace. He called it "a huge warning sign" for the GOP.

Still, by winning in both Iowa and New Hampshire, Trump became just the second Republican in a competitive race—and the fifth candidate overall—to sweep the first two contests. Ironically, though all went on to capture their party's nominations, the only one to win the general election was Jimmy Carter in 1976.

The other Republican was former President Gerald Ford, who narrowly edged Ronald Reagan in New Hampshire in 1976 after winning easily in Iowa. But what happened after New Hampshire in that race may offer some encouragement for Haley to press ahead.

Ford won the next four primaries after New Hampshire, and Reagan's candidacy hung by a thread when the GOP race reached North Carolina on March 23, 1976. But with the aid of Sen. Jesse Helms' conservative machine, Reagan upset Ford, re-energizing his campaign and ensuring the race would continue to the Republican convention that August in Kansas City.

Ford ultimately beat Reagan by the narrowest of margins—43 of the 2,259 delegates. But he lost to Carter in November, in part because Reagan gave him only lukewarm support, and the former movie star turned California governor won the presidency four years later.

See WARNING on Page 11

COVID-19, RSV and flu cases have risen. Should you be concerned?

By SHELDON H. JACOBSON
Chicago Tribune

Sheldon H. Jacobson is a professor of computer science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. A data scientist, he applies his expertise in data-driven risk-based decision-making to evaluate and inform public policy.

With the new year, three upper respiratory viruses have begun to spread among Americans. COVID-19, seasonal influenza and respiratory syncytial virus, or RSV, have all been infecting people and making them sick.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has been doing what it does well, which is the tracking of these viruses. So where does the nation stand right now, and should you be concerned?

Tracking these infections is challenging unless a person visits a hospital's emergency room for a severe case.

Regarding COVID-19, the CDC COVID-19 Data Tracker provides weekly updates of test positivity, emergency department visits and severity indicators, i.e., hospitalizations and deaths. Measures like these provide a way to make sense of the public health risk across the population.

Using hospitalizations based on new hospital admissions per 100,000 people across the 3,220 counties in the nation, the number of counties with a rate of 20 or more new admissions per 100,000 reached 306 in the week ending Dec. 30, or just under 10% of all counties. This number has been steadily increasing from the summer. However, it had dropped to 146 for the week ending Jan. 13.

Yet looking back to the 2022-23 winter season, the nation reached its peak just after the new year, when 640 counties had a rate of at least 20 or more new admissions per 100,000. What is clear this season is that the trend is continuing, and if the trend is replicated, the peak population risk period may have already been reached.

The Influenza Hospitalization Surveillance Network, or FluSurv-NET, provides weekly updates on hospital admissions for seasonal influenza. The numbers are just beginning to rise this season, with the overall rate running around 8 per 100,000 for the week ending Dec. 30, with a dip occurring in the first week of 2024. Not surprisingly, the age groups most affected are the young and the elderly.

The Respiratory Syncytial Virus Hospitalization Surveillance Network, or RSV-NET, provides weekly updates on hospital admissions for RSV. These rates are significantly lower than the rates for COVID-19 and influenza, except for the rate for those younger than 4, which is more than 10 times higher than any other age group.

So what can people do to protect themselves and their loved ones?

Though COVID-19 is clearly the most dangerous of the three, the good news is that the variants that are circulating now appear to be producing fewer severe outcomes than last year, based on hospitalization data. We will know sometime in February whether this trend holds.

Still, the youngest and oldest among us, as well as those with certain health conditions, remain vulnerable to poor outcomes. That fact has been true since March 2020. Moreover, all the new variants are linked to the omicron variant, which means that the current vaccine is likely to provide some protection.

Influenza has been tracked for decades; this season so far resembles prior years. Not enough time has passed to determine whether this flu season will be as severe as the 2017-2018 season.

RSV continues to affect the very young most severely.

Should people shelter in place during this period? No. At the same time, they should take reasonable cautions to protect the most vulnerable. Parents with children younger than 4 should be mindful to keep their children as safe as possible from RSV. If a child shows upper respiratory symptoms, keep them at home and follow CDC recommended treatment plans.

Those who have elderly parents can follow the same advice with respect to influenza.

COVID-19 has a wider footprint of impact across the population. Following safeguards and using good judgment will reduce people's risk.

Though some have described this respiratory season as a tripledemic, the variability inherent in these three respiratory viruses means that there are no one-size-fits-all guidelines. Each of us must consider the risks we face, as well as our loved ones, recognizing the different symptoms of each and potential impact on our lives.

The CDC data certainly informs our choices. What continues to be needed is straightforward, commonsense advice on how to use them.

So should you be concerned? It is never beneficial to get sick. Avoiding infection, no matter which one, continues to be sound advice.

I've lived through high school with Jan. 6. What has changed for our country?

By WINSTON CHU
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

This month marked a significant, personal anniversary for me. I vividly remember having finished class on Zoom that day and turning on the TV to watch the breaking news of Jan. 6.

Indelible images of rioters scaling the walls of the U.S. Capitol and police struggling to hold back the burgeoning crowd flashed before me. In real time, the home of the world's strongest democracy was being torn down by the people it was meant to protect. I was just a freshman in high school, and the event left a lasting impression on me. Alongside history class, Jan. 6 was my introduction to American politics.

Today, I'm a senior, set to leave for college soon. My life has changed so much during these three years. I can now drive a car, come to school without a mask and stay out without a curfew. Yet as I take a step back, it feels as if my country has remained frozen in that early January afternoon.

That day, I decided to write my thoughts down, seeking an outlet for the emotions I had experienced. To my surprise, what I wrote was published in the Tribune days later. I received encouraging messages from readers and was relieved to know that many citizens from different walks of life shared my concerns for the polarization that was tearing our precious democracy apart. Sadly, it appears now that too many of our politicians do not share the same sentiment.

Recently, I watched now-former President Donald Trump promise pardons to the Capitol rioters—or "hostages," as he calls them. I've listened to him promote false conspiracies about the insurrection and reiterate claims about a stolen election—all in the same breath. And I've watched as his campaign continues to gain support.

These messages and their divisive tone have given me and my peers a sense of hopelessness. From the classroom to the cafeteria, there is an air of apathy. Even in an all-important election year in which most of us will be voting for the first time, it feels pointless to engage in political discussion because uncrossable lines have been drawn across most issues. In a country built on finding mutual ground, we are being steered away from the civil discourse and courage that enable compromise. In our formative years, as my generation prepares to lead, the precedents created are counterproductive and uninspiring.

For such a significant event, it seems as if Jan. 6 has been too quickly pushed aside. I'm shocked but also saddened. How could a literal and metaphorical wake-up call for American democracy become reduced to a hot-button issue, lost in the news cycle?

Jan. 6 should have been a turning point that created change and new conversations. I think back to 2001 and how the country united after 9/11, or more recently, how the world rallied around first responders in the fight against COVID-19. But now, the opposite seems to have happened. It appears as if that day has gone ignored, and political tensions have only been exacerbated.

The trauma of Jan. 6 remains a flashbulb memory in my high school life—it's why I've chosen to major in public policy in college. I hope it also holds similar significance for my generation. I still believe we are capable of using this experience to promote change and achieve unity. The last three years have proved that progress isn't inevitable. Even when provoked by this shared traumatic event, we still manage to sink back into existing gridlock. It's our duty to create a new precedent and inspire future generations, not divide them.

In four years, I will become a senior in college. My only wish is that then, in 2028, my memory of Jan. 6, 2021, will still be vivid, hopefully alongside the real progress we will finally have made.

Winston Chu is a senior at Glenbrook South High School in Glenview, Illinois, and will study public policy at Cornell University in the fall.

WARNING

From page 10

Haley's challenge seems far more overwhelming than Reagan's. He was facing an unelected president who had never run a national campaign.

By contrast, she is facing the man who has dominated the GOP for the last eight years and has made two national races. And she has barely campaigned in upcoming states like Nevada and Michigan.

Meanwhile, it is becoming evident that even some Republicans who have been less than enthusiastic about Trump are eager to end the nominating race and get on with trying to unseat President Joe Biden.

Networks had barely called Tuesday's race for Trump when one of the more prominent holdouts, Texas Sen. John Cornyn, issued a statement backing the former president.

"I have seen enough," the Texas senator said. "To beat Biden, Republicans need to unite around a single candidate, and it's clear that President Trump is Republican voters' choice." Nebraska Sen. Deb Fischer also came aboard the Trump train.

But it may take one more defeat—in South Carolina—for the message to get through to Nikki Haley.

CONDEMNING

From page 10

What did Guterres have to say about Mashal's comments? Not a thing.

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Why so many classrooms have empty seats

Education leaders spent the pandemic telling students that showing up to school wasn't necessary. Unfortunately, many of them took the lesson to heart.

The New Yorker recently featured a long piece on chronic absenteeism. Students receive that designation when they miss 10% of school days, which in most places is about 18 days. Reporter Alec MacGillis tagged along with Shepria Johnson, who visits the homes of chronically absent students.

She has firsthand insight into why so many students aren't showing up: It's much easier for some parents. It takes time and energy to make kids go to school and get them ready. In some circumstances, moms worry about sending their children out without winter jackets or clean clothes.

"You were able to just do the things you needed to do," Johnson told the magazine about online education. "Everybody was comfortable. It was, 'I can go to my computer, my baby is in my room on the computer. We're good.'"

Keeping kids at home may feel good in the moment, but it's cratered student achievement. According to the Nation's Report Card, just 32% of fourth graders were proficient in reading in 2022. In Clark County, the rate was just 24%.

Missing class is one obvious cause of why so many students struggle academically. Schools can't teach students who don't show up. Those students don't learn as much, which, for many, leads to a lifetime of reduced opportunities.

Last August, The Associated Press reported that chronic absenteeism across the nation jumped from 13% of students in the 2018-19 school year to 28% in 2021-22. Given its test results, it's no surprise that those numbers are much worse in the Clark County School District. Chronic absenteeism stood at 21.9% in the 2018-19 school year. It skyrocketed to 39.8% in 2021-22 before falling slightly to 36% last school year.

The problem was once largely confined to high schools. But Education Week notes that it is now affecting more elementary school kids.

Policymakers have tried a variety of approaches to combat the problem, with varying results. But the issue highlights the importance of creating a positive and safe learning environment that is attractive to both students and parents.

One way to do that is to expand options for families. If a traditional public school can't get one-third of its students to attend classes consistently, it's failing. Give parents a choice and let them find a school that can motivate their children in a supportive, engaging manner, and both academic performance and attendance will benefit.

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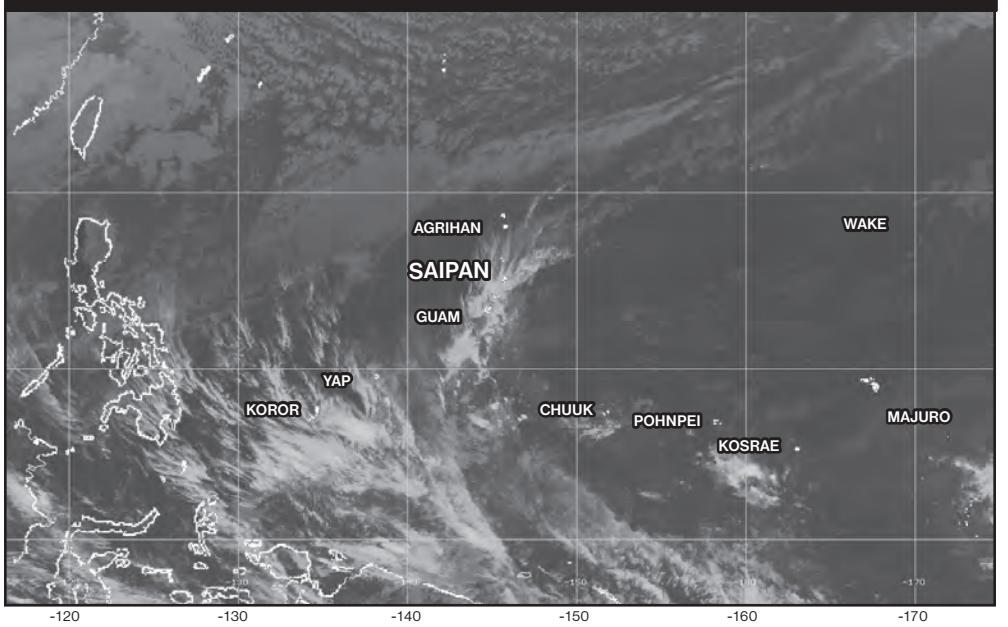
The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. northeast winds 10 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy. A 20 percent chance of showers.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 / 75°	86 / 75°	86 / 75°	86 / 75°	86 / 75°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:12 AM THURSDAY, JANUARY 25, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Weather radar shows patchy showers to the southeast of Guam and Rota and other showers farther west of the local area. Satellite shows areas of heavy cloudiness over the forecast zones. ASCAT Analysis indicates a trade-wind trough is moving slowly westward across the Marianas and a shear line to our northwest is sagging very slowly southward. Surface winds are light to moderate from the NE this morning and buoys show combined seas of 5 to 7 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA	▲	▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Mostly Cloudy	85° / 77°
Palau	Cloudy	83° / 76°
Yap	Cloudy	83° / 78°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	86° / 81°
Pohnpei	Sunny	84° / 80°
Kosrae	Sunny	84° / 80°
Majuro	Sunny	84° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:11 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM
Monday	6:46 AM	6:13 PM
Tuesday	6:46 AM	6:13 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	7:06 AM	6:38 PM
Saturday	-	7:48 AM	7:29 PM
Sunday	-	8:25 AM	8:17 PM
Monday	-	9:00 AM	9:03 PM
Tuesday	-	9:33 AM	9:48 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲	▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	79° / 70°
Beijing	Fair	38° / 25°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy	52° / 47°
Honolulu	Mostly Sunny	82° / 70°
London	Showers	54° / 45°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	85° / 57°
Manila	Cloudy	88° / 75°
Melbourne	Mostly Cloudy	66° / 59°
Miami	Thunderstorms	74° / 61°
New York	Cloudy	47° / 38°
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	43° / 32°
Paris	Cloudy	45° / 36°
Busan	Partly Cloudy	34° / 19°
Rome	Sunny	63° / 43°
Salem	Partly Cloudy	60° / 29°
San Francisco	Cloudy	58° / 47°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	26° / 11°
Tokyo	Sunny	48° / 32°
Washington, DC	Cloudy	51° / 39°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
2:15 AM	Low Tide	-0.48
9:23 AM	High Tide	1.61
2:45 PM	Low Tide	1.02
7:23 PM	High Tide	1.63

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Saipan Chamber of Commerce honors its best in ANNUAL AWARDS GALA

By TERI M. FLORES
Correspondent

For 28 years now, the Saipan Chamber of Commerce has held its annual gala honoring the entrepreneurial spirit, excellence in business, and notable contributions of individuals considered pillars of the CNMI business sector.

That honorable tradition continues this year, with the Chamber holding its Annual Business Person of the Year Gala tomorrow, Jan. 27, 2024, at the Kensington Hall of the Kensington Hotel Saipan, with the traditional CNMI greeting, *Hafa Adai yan Tirow,* as its theme. The Chamber's newly elected and returning board of directors will also be inducted into office that same evening.

From acknowledging just one individual, the annual event has evolved through the years into what it is now—the premier recognition ceremony for diverse individuals and groups in the CNMI that are luminaries in the many fields that encompass the breadth of the CNMI's business community.

Among the many honors that will be handed out tomorrow night are the awards for:

- Member of the Year: Northern Marianas College, Micronesia Resort Incorporated, 500 Sails, and Century Insurance Co. Ltd.;
- Non-Profit of the Year: Pickleball Federation of the NMI, American Red Cross-NMI Chapter, Autism Society of the CNMI, Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations, and Northern Marianas Technical Institute;
- Small Business of the Year: Sweet Lane Saipan, Guam Marianas Training Center, The Angry Penne Restaurant, Eucon Medical Health Services, and Tyler's Gelatte Stone;
- Sustainable Business of the Year: Caravan of Food and Artman Trash Corp. The Chamber has partnered with environmental advocate Mariana Islands Nature Alliance to create this award, which replaces the honor given to a startup business.

The much-awaited part of the gathering will be the announcement of the winner of the 2023 Business Person of the Year, who represents the best of the best in the CNMI business community.

Currently, 28 business leaders in the CNMI have earned the honor of being called the

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NON-PROFIT OF THE YEAR NOMINEES

By TERI FLORES
Correspondent

Autism Society of the CNMI

Founded on the principle of providing encouraging support and promoting and advocating for individuals with autism and their families in the Commonwealth, the Autism Society of the CNMI achieves its goals by leveraging all means available to it to reach a wider public, whether through the powers of social media, collaborating with like-minded groups, or participating in community events.

Through their social media platforms on Facebook and Instagram, ASCNMI members provide support and information about autism to the community. On WhatsApp, numerous family member whose lives have been touched by autism share a safe space where they can swap stories and experiences and provide encouragement and counselling.

"Using our social media platforms have been a great opportunity for our autism community and its family as we've been able to create meaningful friendships without worrying about being judged and together, we embrace the hardships and celebrate the little to big progress our children have made," said ASCNMI president Clarise DLG Arriola.

ASCNMI also collaborates with Disability Network Partners and other non-profits, government agencies, and organizations in helping raise autism awareness in the CNMI.

The group also holds community events, particularly every April during Autism Awareness Month. Among the activities that the group has coordinated with partner agencies include learning sessions on augmentative and alternative communication; the proclamation signing for Autism Awareness Month; Wear Blue Wednesdays that are featured in the group's social media platforms, and fun events that include a Walk for Autism, a Family Fun Day, and Quiz Night.

Community members whose lives have been touched by autism make up this non-profit organization, which was established on March 29, 2007. The group's dedicated members volunteer their time to raise community awareness.

Northern Marianas Technical Institute

Strengthening the CNMI's workforce by providing advanced trades, career, and technical education to students who are considering careers in the hotel, construction, automotive or cosmetology industries is the purpose behind the existence of the Northern Marianas Technical Institute.

Students who also want to enhance their skills and knowledge in technical services benefit from the training courses offered at NMTech.

The trade institute's training courses are designed to both prepare students to enter the workforce and to ensure their success when hired.

The brainchild of former Saipan Chamber of Commerce chair Anthony Pellegrino, the trades institute was created through CNMI Public Law 20-92. NMTech is a non-profit public corporation whose comprehensive hands-on technical training programs in the mechanical and skills trades lead to a certification from the National Center for Construction Education and Research.

Students specializing in careers in the hotel and restaurant industries earn a globally recognized S.T.A.R.T certification from the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute.

NMTech certifications are also available for students who decide to focus on automotive technology, culinary arts, baking and pastry, or cosmetology, among other available programs.

Also available are Google Certificates courses for those who are looking to beef up their knowledge in IT support, project management, digital marketing and E-commerce, and data analytics.

Anyone over the age of 16 may enroll at NMTech, except for students who are already within the CNMI

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Public School System's Co-op program, or PSS Career and Technical Education, which are also career programs. NMTech tuition varies by course and levels.

The trade school provides scholarship opportunities that are available through several government agencies and programs.

The school offers classes throughout the day to accommodate working students, including night classes and weekends.

American Red Cross-NMI Chapter

The American Red Cross-NMI Chapter is one of the youngest chapters in this global humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance, disaster relief and education to those affected by natural and man-caused disasters.

Compared to its counterpart chapters in other countries and territories that have been in existence for almost a century, the NMI Chapter is all but 46 years old this 2024.

Former Saipan Mayor Gilbert C. Ada took the initiative to have the local chapter established to help the community prepare, respond to, and recover from disasters and calamities.

Executive director John Hirsch, who has been with the organization for over a decade, and his four support staff take care of administrative and operational matters. But it is mainly the volunteers and the numerous corporate and individual sponsors and donors that serve as the labor force behind the organization.

As part of its yearly fundraising efforts, the NMI Chapter hosts two popular and well-attended signature fundraisers—the Red Cross Walkathon and Club 200.

Held every May in partnership with the Public School System, the Walkathon draws walkers of all ages. Club 200, on the other hand, is not just the organization's main fundraiser, but has also become one of the CNMI's top social events.

To volunteer and donate to the ARC CNMI Chapter, which includes Saipan, Rota, and Tinian, call 1-800-RED-CROSS (1-800-733-2767) for assistance.

Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations

Highlighting the potential of the CNMI's non-profit sector, the Marianas Alliance of Non-Governmental Organizations, more popularly known as MANGO, plays a unique and pivotal role in supporting non-profits in the Commonwealth.

Established as a CNMI non-profit in 2010, MANGO helps other non-profit businesses and organizations access untapped funds, delivering community services, and fostering collaborations with government programs.

As the umbrella organization for 161 non-profit groups and 68 individuals, MANGO's proactive efforts extend toward fostering potential collaborations with the private sector, aligning seamlessly with the CNMI's state planning objectives to promote public-private partnerships.

MANGO's Finance & Operations director Franco Santos said all of MANGO's services revolve around helping make CNMI-based non-profits sustainable. That goal spans a wide range, ranging from project planning and grant writing to human resources and payroll services to board governance and support, among others.

"Strengthening the non-profit sector is essential to the CNMI's prosperity, with the prospect of new funds, jobs, and a healthier community. To address this, MANGO believes in a foundational approach instead of a quick-fix solution for lasting impact," said Santos.

Pickleball Federation

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Nominees for the 2023 Small Business of the Year

By TERI FLORES
CORRESPONDENT

TYLER'S GELATTE STONE

Grit, determination, and the desire to uplift the human spirit are what drives Ben Babauta to continue creating and serving unique handcrafted gelato creations at Tyler's Gelatte Stone.

Babauta turned his childhood love of ice cream into a business venture about three years ago out of a necessity to provide for his family after losing his job from COVID-19 cutbacks.

It was a visit to a quaint gelato store in Japan in 2020 that ignited Babauta's passion to bring the frozen delight back to Saipan. With a home gelato maker on hand, Babauta first began making his own gelato creations at home before finally opening the creamery at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Undaunted by the challenges of opening a business during a time of economic uncertainties, Babauta soldiered on and opened the Sugar King shop, which is now home to the Italian treat popular for its local twist and creative flavors such as bussin Chamolinian Chocolate, Leche Lantiyas, Mange Mango, Dudus Dragon Fruit Sorbet, Nutella Brownie, Pikaru Pistachio, and more.

What keeps Babauta's business open despite the usual challenges he faces as a small business owner is keeping up the commitment Tyler's Gelatte Stone made toward helping fellow small businesses and the community in hosting and organizing fundraising events, with the Autism Society of the CNMI, the Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Abuse, and the Division of Youth Services among the first groups to benefit from the business' advocacy.

Two of the most impactful events the creamery hosted in 2023 were the Small Business Sundays and the Most Badass People award.

At the Small Business Sundays, which Tyler's Gelatte Stone hosted twice last year, other small businesses were invited to sell products and network at their Sugar King Park location, giving the lat-

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of the Northern Mariana Islands

The name of this non-profit group, Pickleball Federation of the Northern Mariana Islands, pretty much tells you this group's advocacy, which is to take the sport of pickleball to new heights of interest and popularity in the Northern Marianas.

The federation officially got together in August 2020 at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing leadership to the federation is its board of directors made up of Dr. Nelson Krum, president; Dave Guerrero, vice president; Marivic Dunlop, secretary; Nicky Nichols, treasurer; and Bart Jackson, director.

From humble beginnings of playing at a single court at the parking lot of Paradise Dental Spa in Garapan, this group of pickleball enthusiasts has now grown to an 80-member federation.

Krum recalls: "We could only play twice a week when the dental office wasn't using the parking lot."

In 2022, the group moved its main play to the pickleball-striped American Memorial Park tennis courts after joining the Northern Marianas Sports Association.

The federation has also added pickleball courts—eight at the Hyatt Regency Saipan, four at the American Memorial Park, and four courts on Capital Hill.

While popularizing pickleball is its main goal, the federation also places equal emphasis on promoting good fellowship with the community through its outreach programs.

Pickleball is now being played at the local church of the Latter Day Saints and Fellowship in the Son; Isla Montessori and Hopwood Middle School, the American Memorial Park and, even at the Center for Living Independently.

Their outreach program also includes providing a court, paddles, and balls to the Department of Corrections so that inmates can begin to play.

The federation has now taken the sport to Tinian, where there are currently three courts. They are also helping provide support internationally to South Korea and Vietnam.

Aside from continuing to grow the sport on Saipan and Tinian, Krum said the federation is looking forward to some international play with the other island nations in that league following its admission to the Oceania Pickleball Federation. The board is also working on establishing a dedicated pickleball facility for its members.

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Business Person of the Year.

In 1996, engineer Efrain F. Camacho, project engineer and owner of EFC Engineers & Architects, was the first recipient of the award. Following him were Edward Camacho (1997); Joe C. Ayuyu (1998); Marian Aldan-Pierce (1999); Wendi S. Herring (2000); Jay B. Jones (2001); Alex A. Sablan (2002); Jerry Tan (2003); Mark Erwin (2004); David M. Sablan Sr. (2005); Juan T. Guerrero (2006); Kwang Joong Kim (2007); Kathryn H. Barry (2008); Vicente "Ben" Babauta (2009); Robert "Bob" Jones (2010); James Arenovski (2011); Anthony Pellegrino (2012); Marcia E. Ayuyu (2012); Marcie Tomokane (2013); Vicky Benavente (2014); Alex Youn (2015); Mike Sablan (2016); Ivan Quichocho (2017); Velma Palacios (2018); Gloria Cavanagh (2019); Esther Muña (2020); Brian Shin (2021); and John Jay Santos (2022).

Chamber executive director Kimberly A. Camacho says the awards in the different categories serve to validate the significant contributions and impact of the awardees on both the business sector and the community in general.

"For winning companies in the different categories, the recognition distinguishes them among their peers by affirming their efforts, expertise, and contributions within their respective fields," said Camacho.

As for the Business Person of the Year award, Camacho said it is more than an acknowledgment of one's business acumen. Even more, it is a nod to visionary leadership and innovation, alongside a commitment to contribute to the good of one's community.

"The Business Person of the Year becomes an inspiring figure for those aiming for professional success and stands as a role model within the business community," she said.

The Chamber's membership picks the individual and corporate nominees for each of the awards from among the members of the organization.

All nominees receive a certificate of nomination from the Chamber while the winners bring home a plaque specially made for the occasion.

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ter the ability to gain more exposure and customers.

This event paved the way for young professionals and some of the unsung heroes of the community to be recognized at the Most Badass People awards, which the creamery also hosted in 2023.

For 2024, two of the events the creamery will be involved in are the Marianas March Against Cancer and Miss Bikini Marianas.

Babauta draws his inspiration to do good from his son, Tyler, who is the namesake of the shop, as well as people's energy to do something for the community.

"Personally, I am involved with the community because I want to use my platform to give back to the community. It makes me feel good. I feel like if I could inspire people to give back or make a difference. It'll keep going and our community will benefit from it," said Babauta.

SWEET LANE SAIPAN

Ashlyn Chae Young Lee, owner and pastry chef of Sweet Lane Saipan, has made it her life's work to introduce the flavors and taste of French and Korean pastry to the local market.

Opened in 2022, this cozy patisserie located in the heart of Saipan's tourist district is the place to go for light brunch and afternoon teas, romantic dates, and intimate get-togethers.

Creating French-inspired desserts are Lee's passion, which she showcases at Sweet Lane Saipan. This spot has quickly gained a following with its hearty takes on savory café classics, famous macarons, tiramisu, and high-quality cakes, 30 flavors of macarons and sharing portions of Castella cake paired with specialty Illy coffee and fine Ceylon Dilmah T Series teas.

Further delighting its patrons is the charming and understated ambiance of the place, which features detailed interiors, lush surroundings, and generous portions of desserts served in a friendly and relaxed atmosphere.

The 28-year-old Lee, who is originally from South Korea, opened Sweet Lane Saipan at the encouragement of friends whom she delighted with her home-baked goods that reminded them of the taste of the sweet delights they enjoyed back in Korea. To create her authentic French and Korean desserts, Lee uses ingredients locally sourced on island.

Lee's love for baking and creating tasty desserts began at a young age while watching her mom bake homemade goods. In college, Lee studied baking and confectionery at the Suwon Women's University and honed her baking skills as a part of the pastry team at several 5-star hotels in Korea. She moved to Saipan in 2019.

Sweet Lane Saipan is located in the same building as the Naked Fish Bar & Grill in Garapan across the American Memorial Park parking lot. Open everyday from 11am to 5:30pm.

THE ANGRY PENNE

It started with chef/owner Norman Chan Jr. making pizzas out of his apartment garage and selling them through social media. That dinky start is now a bustling, full-service restaurant known as The Angry Penne.

Located on the second floor of Victoria Plaza across the American Memorial Park in Garapan, this Italian-inspired restaurant serves fresh brick-oven pizzas, handmade pastas, salads, and other specialties.

Run by a core of young, Saipan-born-and-bred entrepreneurs, The Angry Penne was born at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic when Chan quit his job to start making wood-fired pizzas from his garage and selling them through Instagram under the moniker Chef Chan.

Once good word of mouth spread and the business started to build a following, Chan took the offer to turn his venture into brick-and-mortar venture in 2022.

As for the restaurant's unique name, Chan and his business associates like to give two versions of the story, both of which are quite amusing.

Depending perhaps on who is listening or who is asking, the first and shorter version breaks down the restaurant's name—"'Angry' because the chef is always angry…and 'Penne' because we're all a bunch of silly boys," said Chan.

The second, and most likely, is the more official version of the story: "After brainstorming for days, my business partners and I started to translate things we like from English to Italian and vice versa to see if anything would stick."

Eventually, the group chose the name of Chan's favorite pasta dish, Penne Arrabbiata, which in English, translates to Angry Penne. And thus the legend was born.

Chan said they pride themselves in making everything from scratch, highlighting local ingredients and focusing on quality over quantity.

"Anyone who appreciates a pizza made from scratch—pizza dough [that's] proofed and fermented properly; sauce made daily and not too sweet; quality ingredients for toppings and understanding quality over quantity; pizza crust with some char and character; pasta noodles made fresh daily; salad dressing that isn't from a bottle—anyone who appreciates those things, is our customer," he said.

Chan operates the restaurant guided by the philosophy of providing the best food and service that he and his team can possibly give at any given moment.

"…Knowing we didn't let each other down, because we did everything that we could. … If we can live in that moment, and learn and grow from that moment, everything else will fall into place," he said.

After recently celebrating its second-year anniversary, Chan is looking forward to continuing offering the food The Angry Penne has become synonymous with and serving its loyal patrons, both from the local community and visitors alike.

For 2024, Chan plans to continue adding more offerings that include expanding the restaurant's line of appetizers and entrees—steak, duck, and fresh fish. There will also be some renovation work at the restaurant and the possibility of expanding its catering services and offering live pizza and pasta stations, salads and other at any gathering.

Follow or direct message The Angry Penne at Instagram at @angrypenne_spn.

GUAM MARIANAS TRAINING CENTER

The mission of the Guam Marianas Training Center is pretty straightforward: to help strengthen the Northern Marianas and Guam's health care system through the advancement of certified healthcare professions.

In addition to its nursing and health care programs, GMTC also offers language courses and certificate courses in business and computer technology. Annually, an average of 130 students from GMTC's Guam and Saipan centers graduate from the school's diverse course offerings.

Founded in 1989 by Fe Valencia-Ovalles, it was initially known as Career Development Specialists. Just six years into its establishment, the school became GMTC after establishing itself in Guam as a leader in private vocational education.

In 1996, recognizing its commitment to workforce development, GMTC became an approved training provider by Guam's Workforce Investment Opportunity Act and was designated the same in the CNMI in 2014.

In 2004, GMTC made a strategic decision to expand its curriculum to include Health and Allied career pro-

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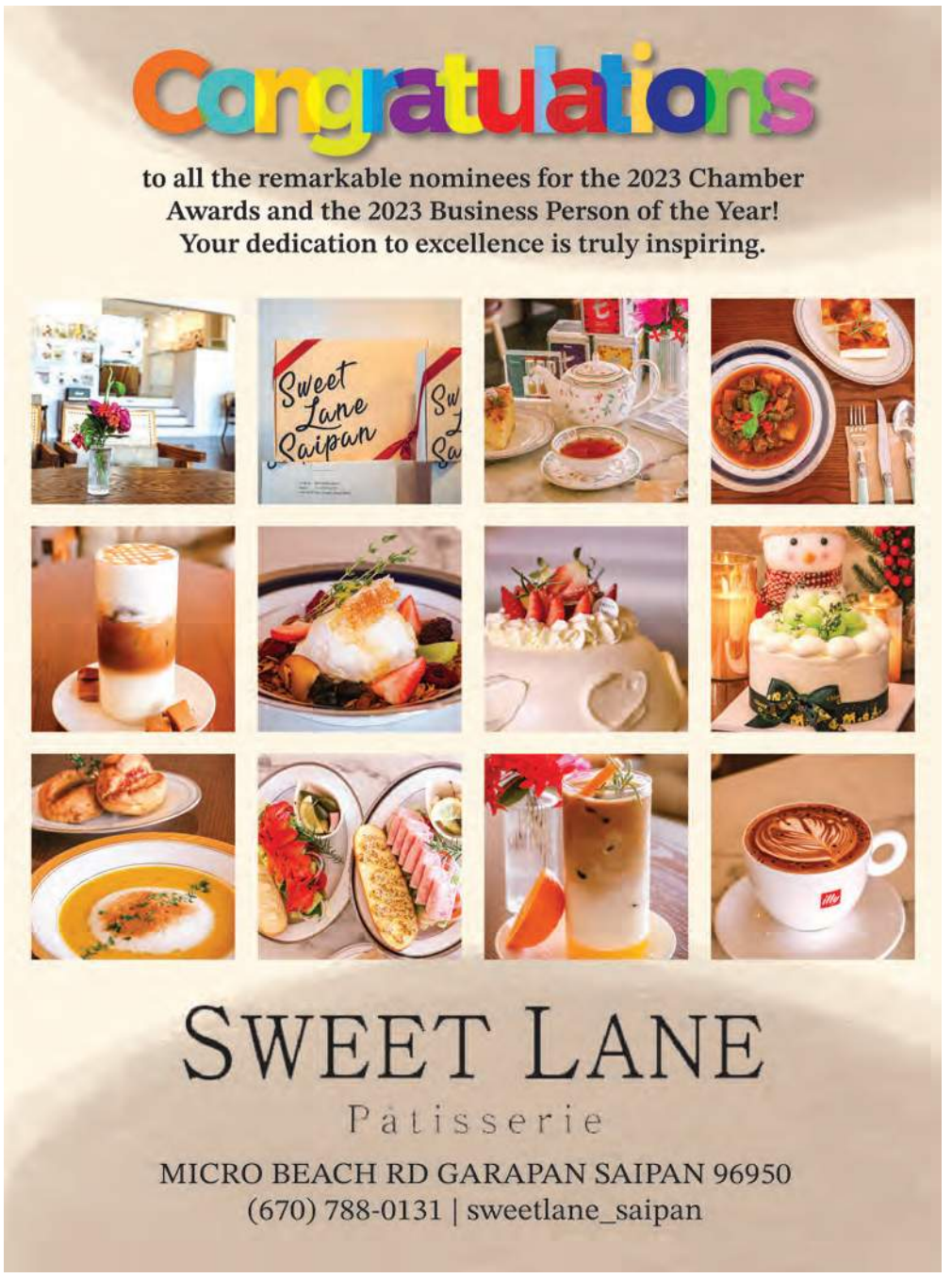
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Nominees for the 2023 Chamber Member of the Year

By TERI FLORES
CORRESPONDENT

Century Insurance Co. Ltd.

Considered one of the trusted leaders in the finance and insurance sector not only in the Northern Marianas, but also in Guam and Micronesia, Century Insurance Co, Ltd. has built a sterling reputation for itself as a quality provider of insurance products that meet all kinds of needs.

Established in 1998 as an agent for several multinational insurance companies, Century Insurance was first a subagent for Moylans Underwriters Insurance.

In 1990, and in anticipation of the growing insurance needs in the Northern Marianas and Micronesia, Century Insurance became the CNMI's first full-fledged domestic insurer.

Since 2004, the company has dominated the local finance and insurance sector by building and sustaining lasting alliances and relationships with customers, business partners, and vendors.

Century Insurance, which is a TanHoldings Corp. subsidiary, offers a line of business and commercial insurance that includes property insurance, workers compensation, commercial vehicle, and public liability insurance. In addition, Century Insurance also provides homeowner and auto insurance and travel accident coverage.

The company is currently ranked first in the CNMI, with a 33% market share in property and casualty insurance.

The company's general manager, Gol Corpuz, attributes the company's success to its unwavering commitment to providing its clients with the most practical insurance solutions to manage their risks.

"Our goal is to ensure that we build value for our stakeholders with the approach of getting optimum results from applying professional insurance practices, keeping up our technical competencies and providing excellent customer service," he said.

Through its partnership with AON, its head office in Guam has attained a high AM Best rating of B++ (Very Good), making Century Insurance a very stable insurance provider.

Further proving Century Insurance's stability and financial strength is its stellar performance during the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020 to 2022, when the company surpassed its target goals. In 2023, the company achieved record-breaking accomplishments in terms of profit and premiums written.

While enjoying its milestones and successes, Century Insurance remains cognizant of the role it plays in giving back to the communities where it does business.

Locally, the company and its team members regularly hold and participates in various socio-civic activities such as islandwide beach cleanups and raising funds and donating to various causes.

Northern Marianas College

Sailing ahead with a focus on learning and a mission of stewardship through scholarship, Northern Marianas College has transformed lives, created opportunities, and empowered the workforce of the Northern Mariana Islands to be active and productive citizens within the communities of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

A public land grant and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving institution, NMC is accredited by the Senior College and University Commission of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges and is home to more than 1,300 students enrolled in a diverse set of academic and certificate programs.

NMC president Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero says that NMC's mandate to meet the higher education and vocational training needs of the CNMI has been the institution's focus since it opened its doors in 1981.

"From the time of its first program in teacher education, NMC has developed a comprehensive set of academic programs and services to meet the social, cultural, occupational and economic development needs of its island communities," said Deleon Guerrero.

The number of individuals that have passed through NMC's hallowed hallways is quite impressive. In its 43 years of existence, NMC has seen more than 20,000 people enroll in regular NMC degree and certificate courses.

Over 3,000 persons have been awarded certificates and/or degrees in programs offered or coordinated by NMC; and more than 12,000 individuals have been served in the community through its Education, Continuing Education, and the Cooperative, Research, Extensions, and Education Service.

NMC has graduated thousands of island leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers, medical professionals, law enforcement officers, and environmental advocates.

The institution strives to inspire the Marianas through a quality education at an affordable price, lifting the tide for students seeking a better life for themselves and their families through global engagement and a unique understanding of the islands' heritage.

Looking into the future, Deleon Guerrero says NMC will focus on its strategic priorities to take care of the college's resources as well as the community.

"We look forward to launching new programs, building new facilities, and bringing new hope to our islands. As our vision statement so aptly states, as we sail ahead with a focus on learning, let us lift the tide for everyone," said Deleon Guerrero.

500 Sails

500 Sails is an organization founded 10 years ago by Pete and Emma Perez. Its mission is to revive, promote, and preserve the maritime cultural traditions of the Mariana Islands through community engagement in canoe culture values and activities.

The organization takes its name from the Chamorros sailing canoes and meeting the Spanish galleon *San Pedro* in Guam in 1565.

After a decade of community programs and outreach, 500 Sails continues to be steadfast in having a positive impact and influence on a multitude of industries in the public and private sectors, including education, tourism, health, business, government, and more, both locally and internationally.

The continued growth of 500 Sails is underpinned by its collaborative work with other passionate people in the CNMI. It has begun partnerships with private and public entities through shared visions and values that reflect the importance of the island community, cultural heritage, and maritime traditions.

Its educational partnerships with the Northern Mari-

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BUSINESS

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grams, garnering endorsements from the Guam Board of Nurse Examiners and the Northern Marianas Board of Nursing for its Certified Nursing Assistant Program.

GMTC bolstered its presence in the region with the launch of the Saipan Training Center in 2010.

Locally, GMTC partnered with the CNMI Department of Labor under then-secretary Edith De Leon Guerrero by receiving funding to introduce a specialized training program in Certified Billing and Coding. A significant number of employees working at the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.'s Revenue Cycle domain are GMTC graduates.

Through this partnership, GMTC continues to assist CHCC in the many audits on the revenue collection aspect of its operation. In fact, CHCC hires graduates of GMTC's Certified Nursing Assistant program, a testament to the robust and enduring relationship between the two.

In 2020, the CNMI's Public School System Nursing Assistant Pathway program was created with help from GMTC. Since the program's inception, an average of15 students per cohort has graduated from the program annually, further underscoring GMTC's dedication to fostering skilled professionals in health and allied sectors across the region.

In the pipeline this 2024 for GMTC is its planned expansion to the Federated States of Micronesia and the launch of a hemodialysis technician course by the end of the year.

GMTC is also focused on standardizing its Allied Health courses to 160 hours to secure U.S. Department of Labor Apprenticeship approval for all courses, beginning with the Certified Nursing Assistant and Certified Pharmacy Technician courses.

In Guam, GMTC is located at 414 West Soledad Avenue Suite 601-A GCIC Bldg. Hagatna with phone numbers (671) 475-4682 / 475-1011 and fax at (671) 472-2210.

The Saipan Office is located at Unit# 105 Middle Road, Pangelinan Bldg., Chalan Laulau, Saipan, MP 96950, with the phone number (670) 235-8883. Email inquiries may be sent to guammarianastrainingcenter@yahoo.com and gmmsinc@guam.net.

GMTC is also on Facebook at GMTC671 / GMTC670

EUCON MEDICAL HEALTH SERVICES

EUCON Medical Health Services is a physical therapy clinic and Pilates studio tucked in an unassuming corner in Gualo Rai, Saipan, wedged between a travel agency and a car window tinting business.

Aside from preventative and rehabilitative health services, the clinic also offers small group classes with five or fewer attendees on Pilates Reformers, Chairs, or at its Barre gym.

Patients can sign up for beginners to advanced Pilates classes, which may be tailored to their schedule.

The clinic is part of the EUCON family and also offers weekly Bible studies taught by Dr. Joel Medasu every Friday evenings.

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anas College-Community Development Institute and tourism partnerships via support from Marianas Visitors Authority, Hotel Association of the NMI, Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, and Hyatt Regency Saipan, to name a few, has resulted in positive impacts that have been evident in branding canoe culture as awe-inspiring and beneficial to the CNMI.

On the international stage, 500 Sails has been featured in correspondence with noteworthy entities such as BBC Future, *The New York Times*, and Local2030, establishing the relevance of the islands, cultural traditions, and community in this era of climate change, technology, and environmental conservation.

This 2024, 500 Sails is committed to elevating its core programs—swimming, canoe building, and sailing—by introducing additional educational components and making itself more visible at cultural events, chief of which will be its inaugural representation of the CNMI at the Festival of the Pacific, fondly known as FestPac, in Hawaii.

The traditional canoe opening ceremony on June 5 at Kualoa Regional Park in Hawaii will showcase the canoe culture of the Chamorro and Carolinian communities. Four meticulously planned canoes, including one Carolinian and three Chamorro canoes of traditional design, will take center stage at the festival.

500 Sails says this is not just a historic moment and an honor but also a thrilling opportunity to offer canoe rides and educational insights, solidifying its role as a leading provider in this cultural endeavor.

In the CFNMI, 500 Sails is excited for the Beach Canoe Project, which will involve 20 canoes across 4-5 different locations on Saipan that will be providing rides to tourists and interested community members. This initiative aims to invigorate local participation and diversify the CNMI's tourism industry.

With the expansion of 500 Sails' fleet of canoes, that also means an increased demand for skilled hands on deck, creating job opportunities and contributing to the vitality of the Saipan community. This project needs a skilled crew, from lifeguards to licensed captains both on and off the beach.

"Picture a lagoon adorned with traditionally designed canoes—entertaining tourists while providing locals with recreational opportunities such as sailing, fishing, and youth-engaging regattas," said 500 Sails.

The non-profit group's Cultural Maritime Training Center stands at the forefront of this endeavor. It will play a pivotal role in preparing the community for careers in sailing, offering tracks like the U.S. Coast Guard-issued OUPV "6 pack" Captain's License and Traditional Navigation, imparting essential open-ocean wayfinding skills.

500 Sails believes the CMTC is poised to be a catalyst, "ensuring our community takes confident strides toward fulfilling and meaningful careers in the maritime world."

Micronesia Resort Inc.

Micronesia Resort Incorporated started business in the CNMI in 2011 with the acquisition of Palms Resort Saipan, later renamed Kensington Hotel Saipan.

MRI has expanded its involvement in the CNMI's hotel industry with the addition of Coral Ocean Resort and Pacific Islands Club Saipan.

As part of its goal of diversifying its business interests, MRC has also invested in a French-inspired bakery aptly named OHAS Boulangerie in September 2023, followed in December by a clothing outlet in Garapan, NC Picks.

MRC officials say they want to augment the beauty of the CNMI as a destination with quality products and excellent service.

"Our vision is to strive to grow together with the community while practicing sustainable management of our environment."

Congratulations
to the nominees for the
2023 Business Person of the Year
and the
2023 Chamber Awards!
Your dedication to excellence is setting a benchmark for future leaders.

Western Union Money Transfer

Western Union Agent	Location	Contact Number	Business Hours
SAIPAN			
Insurance & Business Management Corporation	HDH Building, Garapan	1-670-234-7888	8:00AM-6:00PM (M-F) / 8:00AM-4:00PM (S)
ASKS Fashion & Salon	Garapan, St., Garapan	1-670-233-2643	9:00AM-3:30PM (M-S)
E-Center Remittance	Middle Road, Gualo Rai	1-670-233-5252	8:00AM-2:00PM (M-F)
Island Best Choice	Marianas Business Plaza, Susupe	1-670-235-2883	9:00AM-6:00PM (M-F) / 8:00AM-4:00PM (S)
Armatech Remittance	Beach Road, Chalan Kanoa	1-670-234-8894	10:00AM-6:00PM (M-F) /1:00PM-6:00PM (S)
Islander Mini Mart	Beach Road, San Antonio	1-670-234-5031	7:00AM-7:00PM (M-SUN)
Islander Rent A Car	Airport Road, Dandan	1-670-235-8233	8:00AM-5:00PM (M-F)
TINIAN			
Tinian Fuel Services	San Jose, Tinian	1-670-433-4428	8:00AM-5:00PM (M-S) / 8:00AM-12:00PM (SUN)
ROTA			
Rota Merchandising Corporation	Songsong, Rota	1-670-532-0401	9:00AM-2:00PM (M-F)

INSURANCE & BUSINESS MANAGEMENT CORPORATION
Unit 104 MJ Building, Garapan
PO Box 501217 Saipan MP 96950 • Tel No. 234-7888/7898

Congratulations
to all the nominees for the
2023 Business Person of the Year
and the 2023 Chamber Awards

Customers First TRIPLE J

We celebrate the recognition of your contributions and leadership to our business community and the CNMI as a whole.
- From your Triple J Family

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Surf Club RESTAURANT · Great Harvest Bread Co. BAKERY & CAFE · SANDY BEACH HOMES · SAIPAN COMFORT HOMES · Ocean Ridge Hotels · Tinian Garden B&B · WHOLESALE TO EVERYONE · BAR-K-DINER · TINIAN WESTERN LODGE

The Chamber's nominees for Business Person of the Year

By TERI M. FLORES
CORRESPONDENT

This year's nominees for the Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Business Person of the Year award have both shown exemplary leadership and business excellence and their achievements and contributions have left an indelible mark in their companies, their peers, and colleagues and the CNMI community in the past year.

It is with great pride and honor to introduce this year's esteemed nominees—Emma Perez and Perry A. Inos Jr.—who are both outstanding in their own rights and, by sheer dint of hard work, imagination, and will, are making names for themselves in the twin worlds of business and advocacy.

Emma Perez

President, 500 Sails Inc.

As one of the driving forces and proponent of Chamorro culture and a champion for nonprofit organizations in the CNMI, these are but two of the accolades that Emma H. Perez has become known for in local circles in Guam and the Northern Marianas. Add on the word "dreamer" and "doer" and one gets a complete picture of a leader who knows what she wants and how to get them.

Being a pro at what she does, a good number of Perez's aspirations have come true. A great help is 30 years of non-profit finance and accounting experience she has tucked under her belt. She is also experienced in overseeing millions of federal funds that have been critical to the success of the organizations she has worked with.

After calling San Francisco home for many years, Perez and her husband, Pete, packed their bags and moved to Saipan, where she used her skills as a lifetime nonprofit professional to help the CNMI's nonprofit sector become stronger. That was 10 years ago. She has not looked back.

The couple's return was compelled by Emma's desire to fulfill her vision of reviving the dying art of canoe building and ancient Chamorro navigation and using this to generate jobs leading to the development of a thriving maritime industry. The realization of this dream came with the creation of 500 Sails.

At 500 Sails, Perez conceives, plans, and implements strategic initiatives that prepare local workers for success in new jobs that she helped to create. Her initiatives are now coming to fruition.

"As co-founder of 500 Sails, I was drawn to the work of bringing back the Chamorro canoe because, as a Chamorro from the mainland, I found the story of how we lost our canoes tragic and the long-reaching repercussions were hurting our people. Having the canoes back gives our youth a cultural grounding and helps us all recognize the importance of the natural world," she said.

Perez's efforts have led to numerous collaborations and partnerships with the public and private sectors. In the business community, she is considered an amazing talent for bringing groups and individuals together to focus on common goals and interests.

In fact, prior to co-founding 500 Sails with her husband, Perez was instrumental in strengthening the mandate of the Marianas Association of Non-Governmental Organizations in providing leadership and assistance to local nonprofits.

Perez finds inspiration in working with people who share the same ethos and values. She considers the team at MANGO as the personification of what a good team is. "The passion they feel for helping the community, combined with their ever-increasing skills, makes any time I spend with them rewarding. In many ways, it feels like a 'village' where everyone helps everyone else," she said.

For all her hard work, Perez takes delight in seeing and meeting the individuals and organizations whose lives she has touched through her work.

"It dawned on me a few years after 500 Sails started its work that children in the CNMI today will always have canoes in their lives, something that had been missing for centuries. One time during a sail, a young girl said, 'Please slow down!' When encouraged that it was safe, she said, 'I'm not scared, I don't want this to end.' Success!"

Perez considers her husband one of two people who have greatly influenced her. "My husband has inspired me with his crazy big dreams. We tend to feed off each other's ideas and our skills are different, yet we complement each other very well."

Her grandmother, the late Remedios LG Perez, was also a great influence in Emma Perez's life and work. Well-known as a Guam educator and author of the book *Guam: Past Present and Future*, Remedios LG Perez wrote and illustrated the book as part of the University of Guam's Micronesian Area Research Center's collection.

Emma Perez found validation for her life's work while poring over her grandmother's book. "As I looked through it, I found a picture she had drawn of a Chamorro canoe over 75 years ago—10 years before I was born. …I did not get the chance to really know my grandmother, but in that moment when I saw that drawing, I felt her presence in everything I had done in the last decade. In that book, I saw that I was continuing my grandmother's work."

Be it in business or life in general, running into challenges is a given and Emma Perez is not one to shy from it. For her, the lack of ethos and values are detrimental to both people and the organization.

"The toughest challenges I have encountered were situations where a colleague and I did not share the same ethical standards. That is not necessarily something that can change. …The way to get through those kinds of situations is to take the high road," she said.

Emma Perez believes that, as a businessperson, her role has now evolved into mentoring and preparing the younger generation. Most importantly, she continues her pivotal role of advocating and raising awareness of the unique nature of the CNMI's maritime traditions.

"I believe that, by developing our maritime industry, we can create a new industry, bring destination enhancement, provide light cargo transport, and provide our community with access to wind-powered vessels for food security."

Perry A. Inos Jr.

Managing director and partner
AP Group

At 37 years old, Perry A. Inos Jr. has already earned a reputation in the local business sector as a quietly accomplished business leader whose innovative and sustainable approach has been instrumental in creating businesses that are economically robust and socially responsible, setting new standards in the region.

Inos' current endeavors span across technology, food and beverage, consulting, health, real estate, and financial technology. Currently, he serves as the managing director and partner at AP Group and its affiliates.

In all his ventures, Inos emphasizes innovation, strategic planning, and community involvement.

A profile provided by the Saipan Chamber of Commerce traces Inos' journey to have begun with foundational studies at Northern Marianas College, leading to a bachelor's in business administration from the University of Hawaii and culminating in a master's degree in business from Southern New Hampshire University.

Inos first saw himself as a public servant beginning as a program manager with the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, after which he joined the Northern Marianas College where he oversaw the institution's key programs.

Inos then became the director of Statistics at the Department of Commerce, providing the agency with his expertise in economic data analysis and its application in policy and business development.

Inos also served as the director of the Small Business Development Center, where he played a crucial role in fostering local entrepreneurship and small business growth.

In the private sector, Inos became the Business Development manager for Triple J where he demonstrated his acumen in driving business growth and developing strategic partnerships—skills that would prove invaluable in his later ventures.

All in all, Inos' professional journey, which was marked by the significant positions he held in both government and the private sector, laid the groundwork for his current business and community endeavors.

In his role as managing director and partner at AP Group and its affiliates, Inos has guided the growth of several ventures that include DreamPlay, Marianas Pharmacy, Tapped Out, and Napu Brewing Co. In addition, he is involved in the creation of affordable housing through Vista Homes (LIHTC) and in a financial technology venture, Nakamoto Financial under NF Xpress.

Inos' vision extends to future businesses such as Xpress, a local marketplace delivery system aimed at bolstering economic growth through small businesses.

He is also keenly focused on the hopeful launch of MPay, poised to be CNMI's first indigenous digital payment platform for remittances, peer-to-peer, and business transactions, underscoring his commitment to innovation and economic development in the region.

What makes Inos successful in these business ventures is his keen insight on business operations, implementation of astute marketing strategies, and a grounded understanding of financial and accounting principles.

Inos' community involvement includes his tenure as a former board member and vice president of the Chamber and as the former chairman of the CNMI Zoning Board. He also staunchly advocates for CNMI economic and immigration issues in Washington, D.C.

In addition, Inos continues to support the American Red Cross-NMI Chapter, the NMC Foundation, the Commonwealth Cancer Association, and the CNMI Women's National Basketball Team, among others. His achievements both in his public and private ventures have earned him the recognition of being named into the *Marianas Business Journal*'s 40 under 40 awards.

Influenced by past colleagues, mentors, and the unwavering support of his family, Inos has emphasized innovation, strategic planning, and community involvement in all his ventures.

His connection to his heritage and family forms the cornerstone of his values. With roots extending from Rota to Tinian, Saipan, and Guam, Inos draws inspiration from his family—parents Debra and Perry B. Inos, wife Anastasia, and children Gabriella, Ekaterina, and Tamerlan.

His guiding principles include trust, leadership, communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and balance, all underpinned by a strong work ethic and family commitment.

Inos' advice to budding entrepreneurs underscores the importance of innovation, sustainable practices, strong business foundations, community involvement, and social responsibility—a blueprint for future success in the dynamic business world of the CNMI.

Sustainable Business of the Year nominees

CARAVAN OF FOOD

Offering authentic Palestinian cuisine, Caravan of Food in Garapan is also known among its loyal patroons for featuring a good combination of *halal* and vegetarian-friendly dishes.

Caravan of Food intertwines the essence of the Palestinian culinary heritage with its dedication to environmental responsibility. The restaurant implements sustainable practices in sourcing their ingredients, reducing plastic waste, and practicing energy conservation.

Artman Trash Corp.

Art Man Trash & Recycling is a provider of solid trash collection services in the CNMI.

For three decades now, this solid waste company has worked together with the Department of Public Works and the Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality in taking care of Saipan's solid waste materials.

Owned by Jin Sik Lee, Art Man Trash & Recycling's line of business includes taking care of household and commercial waste, green waste, construction demolition, appliances and furniture waste.

GDOL recruiting more workers for GUAM STRONG Initiative

» 30 positions to be filled through NDWG Program

The GUAM STRONG Initiative, a project to help repair households impacted by Typhoon Mawar, is now recruiting workers through the National Dislocated Worker Grant Program.

The initiative, Getting Urgent Assistance Mobilized to Support Typhoon Repairs ON Guam or GUAM STRONG, was first launched in August 2023 through coordinated efforts among the Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense, the Mayors' Council, and Federal Emergency Management Agency to provide minimal essential repairs to make homes safe, sanitary and functional. Participants were pre-selected through a review process based on a pre-identified need. The process prioritized the elderly, veterans, and those with access and functional needs. Repairs on homes were approved until November 2023 and performed by skilled volunteers from non-profit organizations.

GUAM STRONG has now expanded to begin recruiting workers through the NDWG Program so work can continue through Feb. 25, 2024. The Guam Department of Labor, in partnership with FEMA, is hiring 30 individuals to assist team leads to continue repairs on homes damaged by Typhoon Mawar. NDWG participants must meet certain criteria to qualify.

The priority for eligibility will be given to:

1) Individuals temporarily or permanently laid off as a consequence of the disaster declaration (Typhoon Mawar)

2) Dislocated Worker/Displaced Homemaker

Dislocated Worker is an individual who has been terminated or laid off or has received a notice of termination or layoff from employment.

Displaced homemaker is an individual who has worked in the home for a number of years and suddenly finds that they are the primary source of household income.

3) Long-term Unemployed

■ Unemployed at the time of eligibility determination; and

■ Has been unemployed for 12 or more non-consecutive weeks over the last 26 weeks; or

■ Has made an effort to find a job; or

■ Is an incarcerated individual within 6 months of release or is underemployed at the time of eligibility determination; and

■ Has been unemployed for 12 or more non-consecutive weeks of the last 26 weeks; and

■ Has made an effort to find a job with self-sustaining wages/hours.

Interested applicants are encouraged to apply at the American Job Center (AJC) located at the GCIC Building, 414 W Soledad Ave, 3rd Floor, Hagatña, from Monday through Friday, between 8am and 5pm. For more information, contact the AJC at (671) 475-7000/1.

Visit the following links for the latest information:

■ Governor's Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/govlouguam

■ GHS/OCD Website: https://ghs.guam.gov/

■ GHS/OCD Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/GHSOCD/. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GUAM STRONG has now expanded to begin recruiting workers through the NDWG Program so work can continue through Feb. 25, 2024.

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Facsimile No.: (670) 234-7256

Attorney for Gregorio M. Sablan, Jr.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

JOLENE C. CASTRO and MARLEY C. CASTRO (d.o.b. 12/16/08), by and through, ELAINE C. MATAGOLAI, as the minor child's *guardian ad litem*, Plaintiffs, vs. GREGORIO M. SABLAN, JR Defendant	FCD-PA-Civil Action No. 09-0124 **NOTICE OF HEARING ON ORDER GRANTING TEMPORARY PHYSICAL AND LEGAL CUSTODY** Date: February 7, 2024 Time: 10:00 a.m. Judge: Hon. Teresa Kim-Tenorio

Notice is hereby given that a hearing on the Temporary Physical and Legal Custody will be conducted in the Guma Hustisia, Superior Court of the Northern Mariana Islands on **February 7, 2024 at 10:00 a.m.**, or as soon thereafter as counsel may be heard, in Courtroom 217.

SO NOTICED this January 24, 2024.

/S/ MARK A. SCOGGINS (F0347)
Attorney for Defendant

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

SAIPAN HARBOR DREDGING PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-002-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Saipan Harbor Dredging Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-002-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office, by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, February 2, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their professional qualification statements, no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: January 9, 2024

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY

MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

AMENDED REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

CHARLIE DOCK EXTENSION PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-001-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Charlie Dock Extension Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-001-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, January 26, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: January 18, 2024

DIVISION OF COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

P. O. Box 501304, Saipan MP 96950 | Gualo Rai Center, Saipan
Tel. No. 664-8300 FAX NO. 664-8315
www.dcrm.gov.mp

NOTICE OF APPLICATION

As of January 26, 2024

THE FOLLOWING IS A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT OF COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATIONS RECEIVED BY THE DCRM OFFICE:

APPLICANT	DATE APPLICATION RECEIVED	APPLICATION PROJECT DESCRIPTION	LOCATION	TYPE	STATUS
1. Pacific Coastal Research & Planning (PCRP	12/18/2023 SSPILR-2024-015	Salvage & Recovery (FV Charito)	Lowerbase, Saipan	Shoreline, Ports & Industrial, Lagoon & Reef	Approved* 01/24/2024
2. The Micronesian Telecommunications Corporation dba IT&E	12/19/2023 SSWPICH-2024-016	Fiber Optic/Copper Installation & Connection and Existing Telephone Cable Repair/Replacement	Island wide, Saipan	Shoreline, Wetlands & Mangrove, Ports & Industrial, Coastal Hazards	Approved* 01/11/2024
3. Department of Public Works (DPW)	12/29/2023 SSWm-2024-017	Emergency Repairs of Route 38 and Route 310(EY-19(003))	Island Wide, Saipan	Shoreline, Wetlands & Mangrove	Approved* 01/12/2024
4. Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA)	01/08/2024 SSPIm-2024-021 (Formerly SSPI-2019-X-022)	Amendment to Include a Temporary Dewatering System and to Correct Permit Number	Lowerbase, Saipan	Shoreline, Ports & Industrial	Approved* 01/24/2024
5. J&Y Corporation dba Eastern Cruise	01/12/2024 SPIm-2024-022	Dry Dock	Lowerbase, Saipan	Ports & Industrial	Approved* 01/18/2024
6. Saipan Sunset Cruise, Inc. dba Jade Lady III	01/19/2024 SLRm-2024-023	In-Water Maintenance	Garapan, Saipan	Lagoon & Reef	Stop Clock* 01/23/2024
7. Department of Public Works (DPW)	01/23/2024 SMS-2024-024	Route 310 & Route 38 Road Improvements Project	Takpochao, Chalan Galaide, Navy Hill, Saipan	Major Siting	Application Under Review*
8. Department of Public Works (DPW	01/23/2024 SMS-2024-025	Route 317 Road Improvement Project	Gualo Rai, Saipan	Major Siting	Application Under Review*
9. Mayor of Rota	01/23/2024 RPIm-2024-01	East Harbor Pavilion Project	East Harbor, Rota	Ports & Industrial	Application Under Review*

NMIAC §15-10-210 of the CRM Rules and Regulations requires all permit applications to be published in a newspaper for general circulation within the CNMI within 15 days of receipt of application. The list reflects recently received permit applications and those with a recent change in status. New applications are marked with an asterisk (*).

The Public is invited to submit written comments regarding any of the above projects for which a permit decision has not been issued. All permit comments should identify the project by application number. Your comments should be mailed or hand-delivered to the DCRM Office. All persons who desire a public hearing regarding any project may do so by submitting a written request for a public hearing to the DCRM Office within fourteen (14) days for minor permits (APCs) and proposed amended major sitings. Public Hearings are required for all new major siting projects. All public hearing notices are published in a local newspaper of general circulation. Residents of Rota and Tinian may submit comments and hearing requests to their local DCRM Coordinator. Persons wishing to retain the right to appeal a DCRM Permit decision must file a notice of appeal with the DCRM office within thirty (30) days of the issuance of the DCRM permit decision as provided in Part 200 § 15-10-235 of the DCRM Regulations.

Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit

MTEC

Members of school MY WAVE Clubs catch sight of an endangered Marianas fruit dove at Last Command Post in Marpi, Saipan, during the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit on Jan. 19, 2024.

MTEC

Run Saipan president Edward Dela Cruz Jr. engages MY WAVE Club students at Bird Island Lookout in Marpi, Saipan, during the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit on Jan. 19, 2024.

MTEC

Students of MY WAVE Clubs learn from Mariana Islands Nature Alliance about the dangers of marine debris at Garapan Central Park during the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit on Jan. 19, 2024.

MTEC

Marianas Visitors Authority Community Projects specialist Jack Aranda, back right, leads MY WAVE Club students and chaperones of Garapan Elementary School in a tree planting at Garapan Central Park during the Marianas Tourism Education Council on Jan. 19, 2024. In all, clubs planted 10 trees at Garapan Central Park and Sugar King Park.

MTEC

Fishguyz owner and PADI instructor Sydney Takahashi engages students with a presentation about ocean protection at Banzai Cliff in Marpi, Saipan, during the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit on Jan. 19, 2024.

MTEC

MY WAVE Club students and chaperones of Tanapag Middle School plant a tree at Sugar King Park during the Marianas Tourism Education Council on Jan. 19, 2024. In all, clubs planted 10 trees at Garapan Central Park and Sugar King Park.

MTEC

Northern Marianas College president and Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit 2024 Committee chair Dr. Galvin Deleon Guerrero welcomes students at Garapan Central Park during the Marianas Tourism Education Council on Jan. 19, 2024. Earlier in the day, students had educational lectures at major tourist sites in Marpi.

MTEC

MY WAVE Club students of Da'ok Academy plant a tree at Garapan Central Park during the Marianas Tourism Education Council on Jan. 19, 2024. In all, clubs planted 10 trees at Garapan Central Park and Sugar King Park.

MTEC

Students of MY WAVE Clubs learn about sea turtles from the CNMI Division of Fish & Wildlife at Garapan Central Park during the Marianas Tourism Education Council Tourism Summit on Jan. 19, 2024.

Business

La Mesa Kusina now in Garapan

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Hefe Dave will now be peddling his one-of-a-kind fusion of Filipino-Mexican food following the relocation of La Mesa Kusina from Chalan Kanoa to Garapan.

Operations manager Clint Albert said La Mesa Kusina soft-opened last Jan. 19 next to R&J Liquor.

"We opened last Friday to the public and we had a great response. I'm very happy to see familiar faces. Some funny stories where people were saying they were always there in the other location and they're so happy because they also moved houses to Garapan, which was like a perfect scenario for everyone," he said.

Albert said the primary reason for the move was they were given the unique opportunity to collaborate with R&J Liquor and their duplex partnership has resulted in the construction of the deck.

"The deck is going to be basically La Mesa Kusina and then we'll have this bar open that will be our keg bar. We will also have our own counter coming soon, which will become a cocktail bar where we are going to have events such as Ladies Night, open mic nights, and we're going to be having a band and most probably a DJ in the grand opening."

Aside from being able to collaborate with R&J Liquor, the move to Garapan will also allow La Mesa Kusina to cater to a wider market.

"Before we were limited to about 20-some seats. For big events, we had to just be inventive and we had to have tents outside in the parking lot when we had parties and whatnot. Now, we actually have the space that can accommodate up to 50 people," said Albert.

MARK RABAGO

La Mesa Kusina operations manager Clint Albert, second from right, poses with staff.

The move to Garapan also puts La Mesa Kusina right smack in the center of the islands' tourist district.

"We will have more visibility, more foot traffic, and a lot more vehicle traffic. Add to the fact that there's a lot of construction currently going on down south, the move north is just perfect right now, although eventually the road construction is also coming this way in the future," he said.

Unlike their old digs, though, La Mesa Kusina's Garapan site has fewer seats for customers in the dine-in area inside, as the emphasis has shifted to *al fresco* dining, which will have a giant Warhol-type mural depicting famous scenes in Philippine history.

As for the menu, La Mesa Kusina has retained 90% of the old menu, with El Plato meals renamed to build-your own rice bowls.

They also have a new breakfast burrito that is basically longanisa with hashbrown and Fil-Mex rice and a *sisig* burrito that blends the best of Filipino and Mexican cuisine. Fajita taco quesadilla and new dynamite lumpia have also been introduced.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

La Mesa Kusina has opened in Garapan beside R&J Wines and across T Bar along Beach Road.

MARK RABAGO

La Mesa Kusina's Fajita taco quesadilla.

MARK RABAGO

La Mesa Kusina's ube churros.

For drinks, they've added melon and strawberry horchata and for sweet tooths La Mesa Kusina has its own version of halo-halo as well as other Mexican desserts.

La Mesa Kusina, located beside R&J Wines and across T Bar along Beach Road, is open from Mondays to Saturdays, 11am-3pm and 5pm-10pm. For reservations or for more information, call (670) 234-6372. They're also on Facebook and Instagram.

Biden regulators target transaction-declined fees, considered another type of bank 'junk fee'

NEW YORK (AP)—The Biden administration proposed banning another type of bank "junk fee" on Wednesday, targeting fees that are typically charged by banks when a transaction is declined in real time.

It's the second major proposal by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau over fees that Americans sometimes run into when they bank, following the bureau's announcement that it plans to reduce overdraft fees to as little as $3.

The CFPB's proposal focused on a narrower set of transactions: when a customer tries to withdraw money, send a payment immediately, or make a purchase, and that transaction is declined at the time of the transaction due to lack of sufficient funds. The CFPB used the example of a customer trying to buy $100 in groceries with $90 in their bank account, and the transaction is declined at checkout.

When this happens, banks can charge a fee when a customer attempts to withdraw or debit their account more than their available funds. This fee, which the bureau has previously estimated to be around $34, would be entirely banned under the CFPB's new rules.

These types of transactions differ from overdrafts because a transaction in an overdraft scenario is approved and that customer's account goes negative. They are also different from non-sufficient fees—also known as "bounced check fees"—because those transactions were also preapproved by the customer, like a gym membership or utility bill.

Unlike the overdraft regulations announced last week, the bureau's proposed regulations would apply to all banks and credit unions, even small banks. The overdraft rule applied only to larger banks with more than $10 billion in assets.

"Banks should be competing to provide better products at lower costs, not innovating to impose extra fees for no value," said CFPB Director Rohit Chopra in a statement.

The bureau did not give an estimate on how many of these specific transactions were still occurring. The bureau's research shows that banks with over $10 billion in assets have eliminated nearly all of their non-sufficient-funds fee revenue over the last several years.

Appointed by President Joe Biden to the CFPB in 2021, Chopra has focused a significant part of the bureau's work on combating unnecessary fees and what he considers exploitative practices by the banks. Biden has made the elimination of "junk fees" one of the cornerstones of his administration's economic agenda heading into the 2024 election.

FAA approves inspection process that could clear the way for grounded Boeing planes to fly again

Federal regulators have approved an inspection process that will let airlines resume flying their Boeing 737 Max 9 jetliners, which have been grounded since a side panel blew out of a plane in mid-flight earlier this month.

The head of the Federal Aviation Administration said Wednesday that his agency's review of the scary incident on board an Alaska Airlines Boeing jet gave him confidence to clear a path for the planes to fly again.

The official, Mike Whitaker, said the FAA would not agree to any Boeing request to expand production of Max planes until the agency is satisfied that quality-control concerns have been addressed.

"This won't be back to business as usual for Boeing," Whitaker vowed.

The production limits will apply only to the Max, of which there are currently two models, the 8 and the 9. Boeing builds about 30 a month but has wanted to raise production for some time.

Boeing said it will work with the FAA and the airlines to get the grounded planes back in the air.

"We will continue to cooperate fully and transparently with the FAA and follow their direction as we take action to strengthen safety and quality at Boeing," the company said. "We will also work closely with our airline customers as they complete the required inspection procedures to safely return their 737-9 airplanes to service."

A panel called a door plug blew off an Alaska Max 9 as it flew 3 miles (5 kilometers) above Oregon on Jan. 5. The blowout left a hole in the side of the plane, but pilots were able to return to Portland and land safely. ***(AP)***

Nation

Trump, Biden already shifting to November election mindset

AP

This combo image shows President Joe Biden, left, Jan. 5, 2024 and Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump, right, Jan. 19, 2024.

NEW YORK (AP)—Barely 400,000 votes have been cast in two rural Republican primaries over the span of eight days. But both Donald Trump and Joe Biden are behaving like their parties' nominees already.

Trump's double-digit victory Tuesday in independent-minded New Hampshire, where he was considered more vulnerable than perhaps anywhere else, was a rhetorical tipping point for both Democrats and Republicans.

"It is now clear that Donald Trump will be the Republican nominee. And my message to the country is the stakes could not be higher," President Joe Biden said hours after Trump's victory Tuesday night.

Trump's team largely agreed, even as he raged about former U.N. Ambassador Nikki Haley's unwillingness to leave the race altogether.

"I say the general election begins tonight," said Trump-adversary-turned-advocate Vivek Ramaswamy, who was standing at the former president's side during his New Hampshire victory speech. "And this man will win it in a landslide."

What comes next for a potential matchup many voters don't want

The bluster is just a sliver of what's to come over the next 10 months. Both parties are building out sprawling political operations backed by billions of dollars in advertising to shape the all-but-certain general election rematch between the current president and his predecessor.

It is a matchup that many voters and some elected officials did not want. Both Biden and Trump have loud detractors within their parties and glaring political liabilities. Yet no other Republican presidential candidate in history has won the first two contests on the primary calendar, as Trump polished off Tuesday night, and failed to clinch his party's nomination. And Biden, who won New Hampshire's Democratic primary without even appearing on the ballot, is facing only token opposition in his bid for the Democratic nomination.

Hours before Biden's New Hampshire win was official, the president shifted two key aides from the White House to his Delaware-based campaign. On Wednesday, Biden served as the keynote speaker at a United Auto Workers political convention in Washington, where he accepted the group's endorsement. The auto workers' decision marks a significant step in the president's push to win over blue-collar workers in critical Midwestern swing states.

Despite 2 losses, Haley tries to claim victory thus far in the Republican presidential race

NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C. (AP)—Despite losing both Iowa and New Hampshire to Donald Trump, Nikki Haley is nevertheless trying to frame those losses as a victory and vowing to head off a "coronation" of Trump as the 2024 Republican nominee.

The path through the next states to vote, however, may not be any easier.

"We were thrilled," Haley said during a rally before hundreds of sign-waving fans on Wednesday night in North Charleston, South Carolina, casting her second-place New Hampshire finish as a win given how little support her campaign had in its early days.

"We got out there, and we did our thing and we said what we had to say, and then Donald Trump got out there and just threw a temper tantrum," Haley added, referencing Trump's primary night remarks in which the former president repeatedly insulted her in a speech far angrier than his remarks after his Iowa victory.

Haley did perform better in Tuesday's New Hampshire primary than she had in the Iowa caucuses a week earlier, where she finished third, well behind Trump and only slightly down from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has since shuttered his campaign.

But Haley had been banking on a stalwart showing in New Hampshire, a state where her attempt to appeal to independents and more moderate-leaning Republicans appeared to take root. Trump still won by double-digits on Tuesday night, leaving some to wonder whether she would keep going.

Haley has affirmed that she will do just that, speaking virtually to Republican voters in the U.S. Virgin Islands—which hold their caucuses Feb. 8— before flying from New Hampshire to South Carolina.

The Wednesday night event served two purposes for Haley. It was a welcome-home gathering for the South Carolina resident and an opener for her campaign in the first-in-the-South GOP voting state, which has historically been influential in determining the party's nominee. Since 1980, only one winner of South Carolina's Republican balloting has lost the nomination.

World

Ceasefire efforts for Israel-Hamas war gaining steam

Efforts to reach a new ceasefire between Israel and Hamas appear to be gaining steam.

Egyptian and U.S. officials confirmed this week that they are actively pursuing ways to halt a war that has raged for over 110 days. An Egyptian official said that Israel has presented a proposal for a pause in fighting, while the White House said it dispatched a senior envoy to the region for consultations with Egypt and Qatar.

Any deal would have to include a pause in fighting, an exchange of hostages held by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel and large quantities of desperately needed humanitarian assistance for the war-battered Gaza Strip.

But finding a formula acceptable to both sides has been elusive. The gaps between Israel and Hamas remain wide, and the chances of an agreement anytime soon still appear slim.

"There are contacts all the time but they have not yielded results," said an Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were discussing behind-the-scenes negotiations. "There is a long road ahead."

Here is a closer look at the cease-fire efforts:

Israel declared war following a surprise cross-border attack by Hamas on Oct. 7 that killed 1,200 people and took 250 others hostage. An Israeli air and ground offensive has since left over 25,000 Palestinians dead, displaced an estimated 85% of Gaza's population and caused widespread destruction and humanitarian suffering, according to local health officials and international aid agencies.

Israel has vowed to press ahead until it destroys Hamas' military and governing capabilities and frees all hostages.

In late November, the sides agreed to one-week ceasefire. Hamas released over 100 of the 250 hostages it was holding, mostly women and children, while Israel freed 240 Palestinian prisoners.

The sides blamed each other for the failure to extend the deal, and fighting has worsened since then.

Israel believes Hamas is still holding about 110 hostages, in addition to the bodies of some 25 others who were killed on Oct. 7 or died in captivity. It wants all hostages and remains to be returned as part of any deal. Israel also is offering a temporary pause in fighting, but says it will continue the broader war until all of its goals are accomplished.

Hamas wants Israel to release all of the thousands of Palestinian prisoners it is holding. These include prisoners convicted in deadly attacks on Israelis as well as hundreds of Hamas militants who participated in the Oct. 7 massacre. It also wants Israel's offensive to end and a permanent withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza.

According to the Israeli official, several proposals are floating around. But the sides remain at odds over the length of any pause in fighting, the pace of the hostage releases and the scope of any prisoner release.

A senior Egyptian official said Israel has proposed a two-month cease-fire in which hostages would be freed in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, and top Hamas leaders in Gaza would be allowed to relocate to other countries.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to brief the media, said Hamas rejected the proposal and insists no more hostages will be released until Israel ends its offensive and withdraws from Gaza. He also said Hamas' leaders in Gaza do not want to go into exile. ***(AP)***

North Korea appears to demolish 'reunification arch'

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—North Korea appears to have torn down a huge arch in its capital that symbolized reconciliation with South Korea, a week after leader Kim Jong Un dismissed decades of hopes for peaceful reunification with the war-divided peninsula's south, according to satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press on Wednesday.

South Korea's military also said Wednesday that North Korea fired several cruise missiles into waters off its western coast.

Kim last week described the Pyongyang monument as an "eyesore" and called for its removal while declaring that the North was abandoning long-standing goals of a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of the North's constitution to define the South as its most hostile foreign adversary.

Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC appeared to show the destruction of Pyongyang's Monument to the Three Charters for National Reunification, also called the Arch of Reunification. An image Tuesday clearly showed the arch missing along a roadway.

Clouds and snow cover made it difficult to ascertain when North Korea tore down the monument, but it appeared to be within the last few days. NKNews, a website focused on North Korea, first reported on the satellite images.

The arch was a 30-meter (about 100-foot) tall structure that looked over a highway leading to the city of Kaesong near the border with South Korea.

The cruise missile launches were North Korea's second known launch event of the year, following a Jan. 14 test-firing of the country's first solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile, which reflected its efforts to advance its lineup of weapons targeting U.S. military bases in Japan and Guam.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday that the U.S. and South Korean militaries were analyzing the latest launches. It did not immediately confirm the exact number of missiles fired or their specific flight details.

"Our military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely coordinating with the United States while monitoring for further signs and activity from North Korea," the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as Kim continues to accelerate his weapons development and issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the United States and its Asian allies.

The United States, South Korea and Japan have been expanding their combined military exercises in response to the North's missiles tests. Kim characterizes these drills as rehearsals for an invasion.

Off The Wall

Dirty rat! Culprit fills in Chicago landmark known as a 'rat hole'

AP

Chicago's iconic Rat Hole in the 1900 block of West Roscoe Street in the Roscoe Village neighborhood, Friday, Jan. 19, 2024 in Chicago.

CHICAGO (AP)—You dirty rat!

In a city infamous for its gangster past, some culprit filled in a Northside Chicago neighborhood landmark affectionately called by residents the "rat hole."

The indentation in the pavement on West Roscoe Street resembles the outline of a rat, claws tail and all. It was reported Friday on social media that the "rat hole" had been filled with a substance resembling white plaster.

Transportation and Streets and Sanitation officials told the *Chicago Tribune* that the city was not behind the fill-in—which one day may find itself part of Windy City tongue-in-cheek lore like Al Capone's vault and a coil of bronze faux feces on a fountain intended to remind people to pick up their dog poop.

Neighbors gathered Friday afternoon using a brush and water to scrub the shallow hole in the sidewalk clean, restoring it to its "ratfull" place among the city's iconic—if not strange—attractions.

Tributes, including plastic flowers, a prayer candle, small toys, a pack of cigarettes and coins adorn what may have been the final resting place of "Lil Stucky" or "Chimley," names given by some in the neighborhood to the creature that once lay there spreadeagled.

"Overall, people just appreciate that our wonderful block is getting attention—even if it's to look at a rat hole," Jeff VanDam told the Chicago Sun-Times for a story Friday. "It's a small, quirky feature of a neighborhood where we get used to it, we care about it, and we want to protect it."

Chicago resident Winslow Dumaine learned about the "rat hole" from a friend and posted a photo earlier this month of it on X, formerly known as Twitter. The photo drew more than 5 million views, he said.

People living nearby said the imprint had been there for nearly two decades and was made by a squirrel, according to Dumaine.

"I think at the end of the day, the rat hole is a silly thing, but the thing that made it so viral was the fact that thousands and thousands of people were in on a big, sweet, heartfelt joke," Dumaine told the Tribune.

"Chicago prides itself on all of the things that make Chicago difficult, and no matter how much Chicago hates rats, they love rats," he added. "It's a part of our culture."

US scientist has brewed up a storm by offering Britain advice on making tea

LONDON (AP)—An American scientist has sparked a trans-Atlantic tempest in a teapot by offering Britain advice on its favorite hot beverage.

Bryn Mawr College chemistry professor Michelle Francl says one of the keys to a perfect cup of tea is a pinch of salt. The tip is included in Francl's book "Steeped: The Chemistry of Tea," published Wednesday by the Royal Society of Chemistry.

Not since the Boston Tea Party has mixing tea with salt water roiled the Anglo-American relationship so much.

The salt suggestion drew howls of outrage from tea lovers in Britain, where popular stereotype sees Americans as coffee-swilling boors who make tea, if at all, in the microwave.

"Don't even say the word 'salt' to us..." the etiquette guide Debrett's wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

The U.S. Embassy in London intervened in the brewing storm with a social media post reassuring "the good people of the U.K. that the unthinkable notion of adding salt to Britain's national drink is not official United States policy."

"Let us unite in our steeped solidarity and show the world that when it comes to tea, we stand as one," said the tongue-in-cheek post. "The U.S. Embassy will continue to make tea in the proper way - by microwaving it."

The embassy later clarified that its statement was "a lighthearted play on our shared cultural connections" rather than an official press release.

"Steeped," in contrast, is no joke. The product of three years' research and experimentation, the book explores the more than 100 chemical compounds found in tea and "puts the chemistry to use with advice on how to brew a better cup," its publisher says.

Francl said adding a small amount of salt—not enough to taste—makes tea seem less bitter because "the sodium ions in salt block the bitter receptors in our mouths."

She also advocates making tea in a pre-warmed pot, agitating the bag briefly but vigorously and serving in a short, stout mug to preserve the heat. And she says milk should be added to the cup after the tea, not before—another issue that often divides tea lovers.

Francl has been surprised by the level of reaction to her book in Britain.

Science & Technology

Experimental gene therapy helps children with inherited deafness

By LAURA UNGAR
AP SCIENCE WRITER

Gene therapy has allowed several children born with inherited deafness to hear.

A small study published Wednesday documents significantly restored hearing in five of six kids treated in China. On Tuesday, the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia announced similar improvements in an 11-year-old boy treated there. And earlier this month, Chinese researchers published a study showing much the same in two other children.

So far, the experimental therapies target only one rare condition. But scientists say similar treatments could someday help many more kids with other types of deafness caused by genes. Globally, 34 million children have deafness or hearing loss, and genes are responsible for up to 60% of cases. Hereditary deafness is the latest condition scientists are targeting with gene therapy, which is already approved to treat illnesses such as sickle cell disease and severe hemophilia.

Children with hereditary deafness often get a device called a cochlear implant that helps them hear sound.

"No treatment could reverse hearing loss … That's why we were always trying to develop a therapy," said Zheng-Yi Chen of Boston's Mass Eye and Ear, a senior author of the study published Wednesday in the journal Lancet. "We couldn't be more happy or excited about the results."

The team captured patients' progress in videos. One shows a baby, who previously couldn't hear at all, looking back in response to a doctor's words six weeks after treatment. Another shows a little girl 13 weeks after treatment repeating father, mother, grandmother, sister and "I love you."

All the children in the experiments have a condition that accounts for 2% to 8% of inherited deafness. It's caused by mutations in a gene responsible for an inner ear protein called otoferlin, which helps hair cells transmit sound to the brain. The one-time therapy delivers a functional copy of that gene to the inner ear during a surgical procedure. Most of the kids were treated in one ear, although one child in the two-person study was treated in both ears.

The study with six children took place at Fudan University in Shanghai, co-led by Dr. Yilai Shu, who trained in Chen's lab, which collaborated on the research. Funders include Chinese science organizations and biotech company Shanghai Refreshgene Therapeutics.

Researchers observed the children for about six months. They don't know why the treatment didn't work in one of them. But the five others, who previously had complete deafness, can now hear a regular conversation and talk with others. Chen estimates they now hear at a level around 60% to 70% of normal. The therapy caused no major side effects.

Life & Style

Jodie Foster's back, 'Barbie' brings numbers, and other Oscar nomination facts and figures

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A look at notable facts, figures and curiosities from Tuesday's nominations for the 96th Academy Awards, which saw "Oppenheimer" lead with 13 Oscar nominations, with "Poor Things" and "Killers of the Flower Moon" also running up big numbers.

AP

This image released by Netflix shows Jodie Foster in a scene from the film "Nyad."

FOSTERING THE OSCARS

Jodie Foster became an Academy Awards mainstay starting at age 14 with her first nomination for Martin Scorsese's "Taxi Driver" in 1977. This year she returns with a best supporting actress nomination after an unusually long absence. Like her "Nyad" co-star Annette Bening, she got her fifth Oscar nomination for the based-on-a-true-story swimming drama from Netflix, and it's Foster's first in 29 years. Her last nod was for "Nell" in 1995.

She has won twice, for "The Accused" in 1989 and for "The Silence of the Lambs" in 1992. (Bening has yet to take a statuette home.) Foster has more nominations than the rest of the actors in her category combined. Emily Blunt, Danielle Brooks, America Ferrera and Da'Vine Joy Randolph are all first-timers.

Foster's gap between nods isn't close to a record, though. Last year, Judd Hirsch got his first nomination in 42 years, for "The Fabelmans," breaking a record set by Henry Fonda. Helen Hayes went 39 years between her 1932 nomination for "The Sin of Madelon Claudet" and her 1971 nod for "Airport." She won both times.

The nominations for Foster and Colman Domingo —nominated for best actor for "Rustin"—also brought the rare Oscars occurrence of openly gay actors playing gay characters.

JOHN WILLIAMS DIALS IN ON DISNEY WITH 'DESTINY'

John Williams just keeps creating staggering numbers—both musical and statistical. At 91, he becomes the oldest nominee in history with his nod for writing the original score for "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," breaking his own record, set last year at 90.

Williams has been nominated a staggering 54 times—49 for original score and five for original song, making him the most nominated living person. He'll need a half-dozen more to surpass the late Walt Disney's record of 59 nominations.

But despite all those chances, Williams has won just five times, and has come up empty in his last 22 nominations, not taking a trophy since the score for "Schindler's List" in 1994.

WOMEN'S FILMS HONORED, WOMEN SNUBBED

A record three films directed by women were nominated for best picture: "Barbie" from Greta Gerwig, "Anatomy of a Fall" from Justine Triet, and "Past Lives" from Celine Song. But only one of them – Triet – was nominated for best director.

Gerwig's snub along with Margot Robbie's in the best actress category for playing "Barbie" were widely decried after the nominations were announced Tuesday. But each are still in the larger pool of nominees. Robbie is a producer who will get an Oscar if "Barbie" wins best picture. And Gerwig is nominated for best adapted screenplay. It's her fourth nomination, and the fourth for her husband and co-writer Noah Baumbach, though it's their first together.

THE SPIRIT OF SPIELBERG AND SCORES FOR SCORSESE

Steven Spielberg managed to be an Oscars presence even on a year off. Spielberg didn't direct a movie that was eligible for an Academy Award this year, but still managed to nab a nomination as a producer of "Maestro." He'll get his fourth Oscar if the Bradley Cooper-directed film wins best picture.

Scorsese, meanwhile, surpassed his friend Spielberg with his 10th best director nomination. Both trail William Wyler, who was nominated 12 times and won three. And while Spielberg trails Scorsese in director nominations with nine, he tops him in wins two to one.

But Scorsese stands alone as the oldest-ever best director nominee at 81, surpassing John Huston's nomination at 79 for "Prizzi's Honor" in 1986.

Jon Stewart will return to 'The Daily Show' as host—just on Mondays

NEW YORK (AP)—Comedian Jon Stewart is rewinding the clock, returning to "The Daily Show" as a weekly host and executive producing through the 2024 U.S. elections cycle.

Comedy Central on Wednesday said Stewart will host the topical TV show, the perch he ruled for 16 years starting in 1999, every Monday starting Feb. 12. A rotating lineup of show regulars are on tap for the rest of the week.

"Jon Stewart is the voice of our generation, and we are honored to have him return to Comedy Central's The Daily Show to help us all make sense of the insanity and division roiling the country as we enter the election season," Chris McCarthy, president and CEO of Showtime/MTV Entertainment Studios, said in a statement. "In our age of staggering hypocrisy and performative politics, Jon is the perfect person to puncture the empty rhetoric and provide much-needed clarity with his brilliant wit."

Over the years, "The Daily Show"—first hosted by Craig Kilborn, then Stewart and Trevor Noah—has skewered the left and right by making the media a character and playing it absolutely straight, no matter how ridiculous.

AP

Jon Stewart attends The Albies hosted by the Clooney Foundation for Justice at the New York Public Library in New York on Sept. 28, 2023.

The show, which won an Emmy Award this month for best talk series, has not had a permanent host since Noah left last year. Current correspondents include Desi Lydic, Michael Kosta, Ronny Chieng and Jordan Klepper.

Stepson's crimes are more than stepmom can tolerate

DEAR ABBY: My 30-year-old stepson, "David," is a convicted sex offender, currently serving a 15-year sentence for possession of child pornography and having inappropriate conversations with a preteen that almost went further. This was his third arrest for the same thing. David is also mildly autistic.

I am beside myself. Because of David's autism, his family looks the other way about his crimes. They all send him money, call him, buy him things, etc. I have kids of my own, and, frankly, the whole situation makes me want to vomit. I hide how I feel and try to be there for my husband because he loves his son, and it pains him to see David in prison. He also has been wonderful to my kids and raised them like his own.

I'm dreading what is going to happen when David is out of prison. He has nowhere to go, and I know he's going to want to live with us. I am 1,000% against this, and I truly believe it could happen again.

My kids will be adults soon and away at college when he's released, so I can't use that as an excuse for him not to live with us. I also don't want my home address on the sex offender registry. The street where I live is full of children. What can I do?

I don't want to lose my husband over this. I love him with all my heart, which is why I can't tell him how I feel. Every time David speaks with his dad, he tells him he wishes he were home with him. Please help!

STEPMOM WHO'S DREADING IT

DEAR STEPMOM: It is time to have an honest talk with your husband about this. When a sex offender is released from prison, there are stipulations in place. One of them is being forbidden to live close to young, vulnerable children. Because your street is populated with them, David may not be ABLE to live with you. This is something you and your husband need to be communicating about as David's release draws nearer, because it will have an impact on your lives.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: My wife and I are part of a three-couple group who enjoy dining out as well as entertaining in our homes. However, while my wife and I and one other couple serve as hosts, the third never invites us into their home. They often suggest a menu or an occasion for us or the other couple to serve when we host.

This has gone on for at least five years. Both wives (who do most of the work for whatever in-home event there is) don't seem bothered by it, but it irks me. Is there a way to kindly suggest the third couple host without causing a problem?

FAIR IN SOUTH CAROLINA

DEAR FAIR: There can be several reasons why people behave as this couple does. They may not be confident in their cooking skills or the appearance of their home. However, they SHOULD attempt to make up for it in other ways such as offering to bring food or beverages, or by doing the cleanup after the dinners. I see nothing wrong with asking the couple the reason for their reluctance, as long as it is done privately.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY

By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

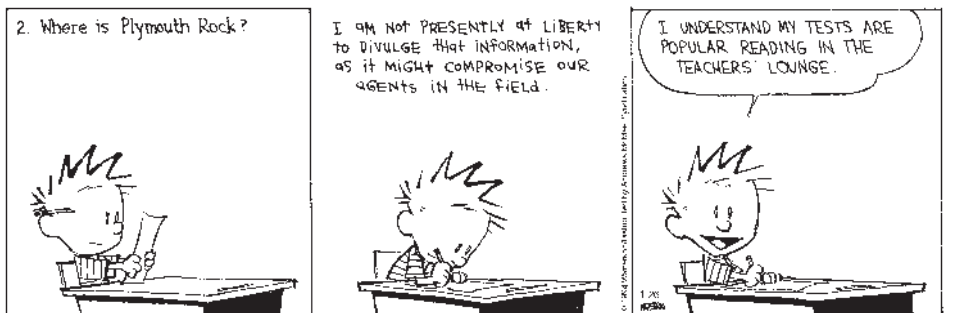
Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

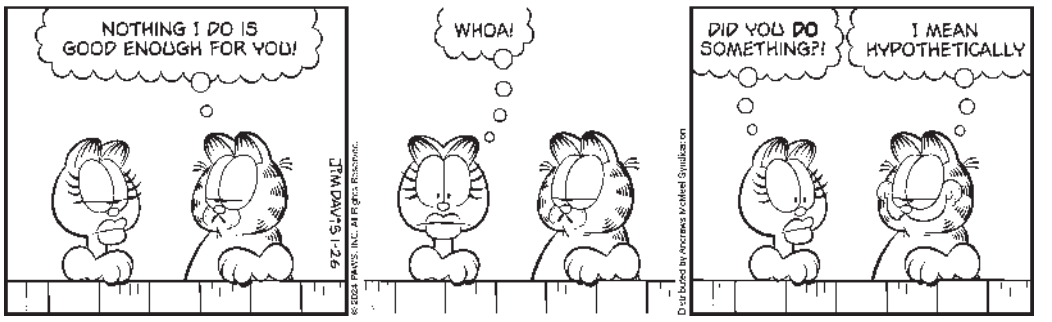
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


2. Where is Plymouth Rock?
I am not presently at liberty to divulge that information, as it might compromise our agents in the field.
I understand my tests are popular reading in the teachers' lounge.

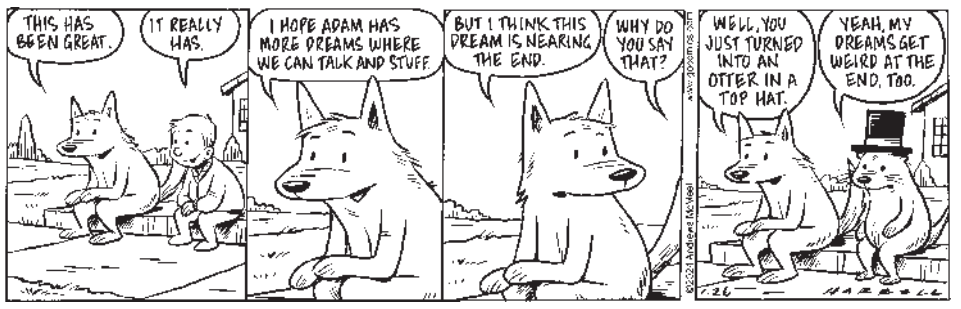
Garfield®

By Jim Davis



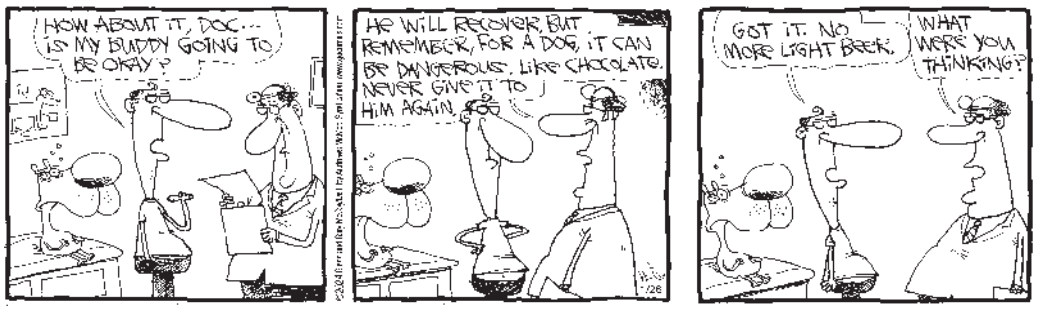
Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


THIS HAS BEEN GREAT.
IT REALLY HAS.
I HOPE ADAM HAS MORE DREAMS WHERE WE CAN TALK AND STUFF
BUT I THINK THIS DREAM IS NEARING THE END.
WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?
WELL, YOU JUST TURNED INTO AN OTTER IN A TOP HAT.
YEAH, MY DREAMS GET WEIRD AT THE END, TOO.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


HOW ABOUT IT, DOC... IS MY BUDDY GOING TO BE OKAY?
HE WILL RECOVER, BUT REMEMBER, FOR A DOG, IT CAN BE DANGEROUS. LIKE CHOCOLATE. NEVER GIVE IT TO HIM AGAIN.
GOT IT. NO MORE LIGHT BEER.
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Clear the tables
4 C&W artist McEntire
8 BTS genre
12 Little rascal
13 Algerian port
14 Prefix with dynamic
15 Traffic jam noise-makers
17 Oboe insert
18 Pet food brand
19 British nobles
20 Wee
22 Sediment
24 Leak slowly
25 San Francisco transport
29 Fr. holy woman
30 Rock legend Joplin
31 Flamenco cheer
32 Perches for traveling tots
34 Oklahoma city
35 Sicilian peak
36 Almanac data
37 Levels
40 Extended lunch?
41 Toy block name
42 Overcrowded circus vehicle
46 Petri dish gel
47 Rhine feeder
48 Fill in — blank
49 "Peter Pan" pooch
50 Tale teller
51 Half a dozen

DOWN

1 Pen name
2 Actress Thurman
3 Wine-and-soda drink
4 Spacious
5 Blunders
6 Prohibit
7 Reply (Abbr.)
8 Dojo activity
9 Equal
10 Baseball's Hershiser
11 Seed holders
16 Abhor
19 Right angles
20 Pear variety
21 Tiny bit
22 Blitzen's boss
23 Nile bird
25 "Misery" star James
26 Cooks up
27 Landed
28 Some wines
30 Fast fliers
33 Madrid matron
34 Deserve
36 Not as many
37 Flair
38 Lyra's brightest star
39 Novelist Jennifer
40 Circle dance
42 "East of Eden" brother
43 Chou En- —
44 Sushi fish
45 Actor Harrison

Solution time: 25 mins.

A	M	O	R		A	R	C		P	S	A	S
R	A	R	E		N	I	H		E	U	R	O
A	N	A	G		N	E	E		T	N	I	P
B	Y	L	I	N	E		E	A	R	P		
			M	A	X	I	S	K	I	N	T	S
M	A	M	C	T		G	E	A		I	O	U
I	R	A	N		H	I	S		I	S	L	E
S	I	R		B	O	Z		O	N	E	L	S
I	A	X	I	S	I	A	N	D	S			
		I	R	A	S		I	D	I	O	M	S
M	I	S	O		C	E	K		S	V	E	N
A	T	T	N		A	I	F		T	A	R	O
I	T	S	Y		T	I	S		S	I	F	W

Yesterday's answer 1-26

1	2	3	■	4	5	6	7	■	8	9	10	11
12			■	13					14			
15			16					■	17			
■	■	18				■	■	19				
20	21				■	22	23			■	■	■
24				■	25					26	27	28
29			■	30					■	31		
32			33					■	34			
■	■	■	35				■	36				
37	38	39			■	■	40				■	■
41				■	42	43					44	45
46				■	47				■	48		
49				■	50				■	51		

STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Colin O'Donoghue, 43; Sara Rue, 45; Ellen DeGeneres, 66; Lucinda Williams, 71.

Happy Birthday: Choose intelligence over emotions. If you act in haste, you'll make a mistake that can affect your home and relationships. Plan your actions and initiate changes that offer more opportunities and less emotional stress. Take matters into your hands and carve out how you want your life to move forward. Don't be afraid to take control of situations. Do what makes you happy. Your numbers are 3, 10, 16, 25, 36, 40, 48.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Forgo trivial matters, don't let anyone goad you into a debate and sidestep anyone tempting you to take a physical or financial risk. Make plans to do something that lowers stress, puts a smile on your face and brings you joy. Start a new hobby. ✪✪✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Stick to the facts and leave no room for error. Stop anyone who exaggerates or gossips before someone gets hurt. Take control and complete what you set out to achieve. Personal gain is within reach. Pay attention to your appearance, and make romance a priority. ✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Travel for educational purposes or research. Keep your pursuits a secret until you have enough information to formulate your next move. Don't make decisions based on what others do or while under emotional duress. Get the facts and do what's best for you. ✪✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: A situation that could be emotional requires adjustment. Avoid joint ventures and sharing expenses. Set an agenda and head in a direction that doesn't require approval or permission. A creative project will change your direction or lifestyle. Self-promotion is favored. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: A risk can change your status quo. Listen, observe and assess situations rationally before you act. Your tendency to overreact will work against you. Protect your reputation and position. When in doubt, get an expert's advice. Pay attention to financial costs and details. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Make changes at home that lower your overhead and improve your living conditions. Take part in something that will broaden your awareness or bring you in touch with someone from your past. A trip or online chat will offer valuable information. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Don't mix emotions and money. The cost of a repair or replacement will take you by surprise. Look for a payment plan you can afford or an alternative that doesn't cost as much. Swift action on your part will help you come out ahead. ✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Settle differences with compromise, and it will encourage opportunities instead of setting boundaries. Share your ideas and concerns, and you'll get feedback that helps expand your plans. A chance to work with someone special will bring you closer together. ✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Know where your money goes. Spending on things you don't need will collide with unexpected expenses, leaving you short of cash and feeling stressed. Get expert advice rather than listening to a know-it-all who will point you in the wrong direction. ✪✪✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Consider what you want to pursue and what makes you happy. Focus on your living space and how it affects your functionality and relationships with others. An opportunity to engage in community events will lead to an exciting connection and personal growth. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Put your energy to good use. Concentrate on closure and prepping for something you want to pursue. Focus on what you do best and what makes you happy instead of letting someone use manipulation to occupy your time and take advantage of your skills. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Change what's necessary. Keep your money and possessions in a safe place and avoid unnecessary purchases. Concentrate on personal gains that will raise your confidence and give you the courage to control what happens next. Speak up and pursue what brings you joy. ✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are creative, kind and flexible. You are intelligent and proactive.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

				8			5	1
3						7		
							9	
		5	7	3		8		
	8			1				6
	6			5	9	2		
	1			6			2	
	5	2			4			
8			9	2				

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/26

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

1	4	7	2	8	6	5	3	9
9	8	5	3	4	1	2	7	6
2	6	3	9	7	5	1	8	4
8	5	1	6	9	2	3	4	7
4	7	6	8	5	3	9	2	1
3	2	9	7	1	4	8	6	5
6	9	4	5	2	8	7	1	3
5	1	2	4	3	7	6	9	8
7	3	8	1	6	9	4	5	2

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/25

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

IT'S RUDIMENTARY Solution: 6 letters

S	E	R	V	I	C	E	U	Q	I	N	H	C	E	T
T	U	L	E	A	R	L	Y	R	O	T	S	I	H	R
A	N	B	E	G	I	N	N	I	N	G	N	E	E	A
G	D	E	J	A	N	C	I	E	N	T	O	G	G	T
E	E	T	L	E	R	O	C	I	R	R	U	F	N	I
S	R	U	O	L	C	N	N	O	Y	L	U	I	I	O
E	S	L	R	U	E	T	D	H	A	N	S	R	N	N
L	T	O	D	R	E	U	P	T	C	Ⓣ	S	S	I	A
P	A	S	E	G	C	O	I	T	L	L	Ⓢ	T	A	L
I	N	B	R	T	S	O	I	O	P	E	E	Ⓔ	R	A
C	D	A	O	O	N	O	N	I	D	E	A	A	Ⓣ	I
N	L	R	L	A	N	T	I	Q	U	E	C	D	R	C
I	Y	I	S	W	A	L	A	R	U	T	A	N	E	U
R	H	W	R	I	T	E	Z	I	N	A	G	R	O	R
P	R	I	M	A	R	Y	G	E	T	A	R	T	S	C

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Absolute, Ancient, Antique, Beginning, Clear, Concept, Core, Crucial, Early, First, Function, History, Idea, Integral, Introductory, Laws, Leader, Learn, Natural, Order, Organize, Philosophy, Primary, Principles, Rational, Regulation, Rule, Service, Stage, Strategy, Subject, Technique, Test, Theory, Training, Understand, Write

Yesterday's Answer: Toasted

The NEW **TELEWORD VINTAGE COLLECTION EDITION #1** can be purchased on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Giannis records triple-double, Bucks beat Cavs in game after Griffin firing

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had his third triple-double in his last four games and the Milwaukee Bucks responded to the firing of coach Adrian Griffin with a 126-116 victory Wednesday night that snapped the Cleveland Cavaliers' eight-game winning streak.

Antetokounmpo had 35 points, matched a season high with 18 rebounds and had 10 assists for his seventh triple-double of the season. Damian Lillard scored 28 points and Khris Middleton added 24 for the Bucks.

Griffin was fired Tuesday despite being 30-13 in his lone season as coach. Joe Prunty, an assistant on Griffin's staff, served as interim head coach Wednesday while the Bucks were finalizing negotiations with Doc Rivers to eventually take over.

Central Division-leading Milwaukee has the Eastern Conference's second-best record.

Donovan Mitchell had 23 points and Jarrett Allen added 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Cavs, second in the Central Division at 26-16. Georges Niang and Max Strus scored 14 points each, Sam Merrill 12 and Isaac Okoro 10.

AP

Cleveland Cavaliers' Caris LeVert tries to get past Milwaukee Bucks' Giannis Antetokounmpo during the first half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Jan. 24, 2024, in Milwaukee.

WARRIORS 134, HAWKS 112

SAN FRANCISCO (AP)—Stephen Curry had 25 points and eight assists, Klay Thompson scored 24, and the Warriors won in their first game back after the death of assistant coach Dejan Milojević last week, beating the Hawks.

The Splash Brothers shined playing for their beloved "brate"—the word for brother in Serbian that Milojević so lovingly used for all of the Warriors. Jonathan Kuminga made all 11 of his shots on the way to 25 points as seven Warriors scored in double figures.

In an emotional pregame ceremony, the two teams stood united on one sideline near their team benches and listened as the Serbian national anthem played in his honor. Each Warrior player then placed an extra jersey with Milojević's name on the back worn during warmups on one of the coaching chairs, which also featured a special black T-shirt with the word "BRATE" draped over the seat.

SUNS 132, MAVERICKS 109

DALLAS (AP)—Devin Booker scored 22 of his 46 points in a decisive third quarter and Phoenix matched its longest winning streak of the season at seven games with a win over Dallas.

Kevin Durant had 12 points and 10 rebounds as the Suns opened a seven-game trip, their longest this season, by turning a 16-point deficit in the second quarter into a 22-point lead after outscoring Dallas 43-20 in the third.

Kyrie Irving was out for the Mavericks, who have lost four of five, after spraining his right thumb early in a loss to Boston two nights earlier.

Luka Doncic had 34 points, eight rebounds and nine assists, but didn't have much help from his Dallas teammates. The Suns got 20 points from Bradley Beal and 15 from Grayson Allen.

THUNDER 140, SPURS 114

SAN ANTONIO (AP)—Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 32 points and 10 assists, and the Thunder overcame 24 points and 12 rebounds from Victor Wembanyama to beat the Spurs.

Chet Holmgren had 17 points and nine rebounds as Oklahoma City won its fourth straight.

Thunder coach Mark Daigneault attempted to downplay the matchup between two of the top contenders for Rookie of the Year in Wembanyama and Holmgren.

But it was difficult to ignore a pair of 7-footers with a unique set of skills.

In the end, Oklahoma City's balanced attack proved too much for San Antonio.

GRIZZLIES 105, HEAT 96

MIAMI (AP)—Vince Williams Jr. scored 25 points, GG Jackson added 17 off the bench and short-handed Memphis spoiled Terry Rozier's debut in Miami.

Scotty Pippen Jr. and Jaren Jackson Jr. each scored 15 for Memphis, which led for the entire second half. John Konchar had 11 points and 10 rebounds for the Grizzlies.

Tyler Herro scored 18 for Miami, which has dropped four straight for the second time this season. Bam Adebayo finished with 15 points, 15 rebounds, six assists and six blocks for the Heat.

Jimmy Butler and Caleb Martin also scored 15 apiece, and Rozier—acquired Tuesday in a trade with Charlotte—had nine on 3-for-11 shooting.

TIMBERWOLVES 118, WIZARDS 107

WASHINGTON (AP)—Anthony Edwards scored 38 points and Western Conference-leading Minnesota avoided its first three-game skid of the season, beating Washington.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 27 points and Rudy Gobert added 19 points and 16 rebounds for the Wolves. Minnesota was coming off a home loss to lowly Charlotte in which Towns scored 62 points.

Deni Avdija scored a season-high 24 points for the Wizards, who dropped their fifth straight, the fourth skid of at least that many games for the league's second-worst team. Washington has only one win this season over a team that came in with a winning record.

Marvin Bagley III had 17 points and a season-high 15 rebounds for the Wizards, and Kyle Kuzma added 17 points, 14 boards and eight assists.

TRAIL BLAZERS 137, ROCKETS 131, OT

HOUSTON (AP)—Anfernee Simons scored 33 points and Jerami Grant added 21 as Portland rallied to beat Houston.

Portland opened overtime with a 9-2 run, with five points from Malcolm Brogdon, to take a 133-126 lead and held on for the victory.

Brogdon had 19 points and Deandre Ayton added 18 points and 17 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who snapped a two-game skid.

Alperen Sengun had 30 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists, and Jalen Green scored 29 as the Rockets dropped a second straight game.

PISTONS 113, HORNETS 106

DETROIT (AP)—Bojan Bogdanovic scored 34 points and Jalen Duren's dunk in the final minute punctuated a late 10-2 run, helping Detroit beat Charlotte.

Bogdanovic hit a game-tying 3-pointer with 1:46 left. Duren finished with 14 points and eight rebounds, and Alec Burks scored 15 for Detroit, which snapped a three-game losing streak and won for the third time in 41 games.

Brandon Miller led the Hornets with 23 points, and Nick Richards added 21 points and 10 rebounds. LaMelo Ball scored 17 points on 6-for-21 shooting and 1-for-8 sniping from 3-point range. The Hornets were playing for the first time since trading Terry Rozier for Kyle Lowry and a draft pick. Rozier had led the team in points and assists.

Source: Doc Rivers is finalizing deal to take over as Bucks coach

MILWAUKEE (AP)—Doc Rivers is finalizing a deal to take over as the Milwaukee Bucks coach a day after the firing of Adrian Griffin, a person with knowledge of the negotiations told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

Rivers and the Bucks were still negotiating on Wednesday, according to the person who spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because no contract had been completed.

ESPN, where Rivers has worked this season an analyst, reported that Rivers has agreed to a deal in principle. ESPN's public relations department released a statement on social media from head of event and studio production David Roberts saying, "We wish Doc well and we look forward to documenting the next chapter of his coaching career."

Interim coach Joe Prunty led the Bucks on Wednesday night for their 126-116 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers. Bucks general manager Jon Horst held a news conference before the game to discuss Griffin's dismissal but declined to discuss the coach's potential successor.

"We're not going to talk about Doc tonight," Horst said. "That's not part of this. There will be at some point hopefully a time where we can do that, but this is a chance for us to kind of dive into the Adrian Griffin piece."

Horst indicated he didn't consult players before firing Griffin, who had led the Bucks to a 30-13 record that put them second to the Boston Celtics in the Eastern Conference standings.

Bucks players said the move caught them by surprise.

"The record speaks for itself," two-time MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo said after Wednesday's game. "He was 30-13. At the end of the day, this is the NBA. Sometimes decisions are made. It's a hard job. I feel and I hope everybody who came to the podium today and spoke about this situation gave Coach Griff his props and his credit.

"At the end of the day, he's a head coach and he's going to be around the league for a long time. We're going to see him probably in the near future.

Antetokounmpo also showed his support for management.

"At the end of the day, I trust the ownership decision," Antetokounmpo said. "I trust the front office. They've never (steered) me wrong in the past. They've always created a great atmosphere, a great culture, a winning culture. They always did whatever was the best for the team and for us to be in a position to win, so we've just got to do the same here. You've just got to trust this is the best decision for me and the guys, and we've just got to go with it."

Griffin had never been a head coach until the Bucks hired him last summer, though he had spent 16 years as an assistant. The Bucks would be replacing him with someone who has nearly a quarter-century of head coaching experience.

Rivers has plenty of Milwaukee ties, as he played for Marquette from 1980-83 and his No. 31 jersey hangs from the Fiserv Forum rafters. He also has a championship background after leading the Boston Celtics to a title in 2008 and a Game 7 Finals appearance two years later.

He didn't have as much postseason success in later stints with the Los Angeles Clippers (2013-20) and Philadelphia 76ers (2020-23). The 76ers fired him last year after they exited in the second round of the playoffs each of his three seasons in Philadelphia.

Rivers' 1,097 regular-season wins put him one shy of Larry Brown for eighth most in NBA history. His departure from ESPN brought an emotional reaction from his broadcast teammates, Mike Breen and Doris Burke, before ABC aired the Dallas-Phoenix game on Wednesday night.

"Our dear friend has decided that life as an NBA broadcaster is way too stressful, so he's decided to opt for a less-stressful job — an NBA head coach on a team that's trying to win a championship," Breen said on the broadcast. "We thank him for all his many weeks of service and we wish him all the luck in the world."

Rivers would be taking over a team that is chasing its second NBA title in four years and has shown a sense of urgency in the moves it has made over the last year.

The Bucks posted the NBA's best regular-season record last year, but fired coach Mike Budenholzer after a stunning 4-1 first-round playoff loss to the Miami Heat. Budenholzer had led the 2020-21 Bucks to the franchise's first championship in half a century.

10-time champ Djokovic beats Fritz, will play Sinner in semis

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Nobody has ever been better at this end of the Australian Open than Novak Djokovic, the 10-time champion.

Every time he's won a quarterfinal at Melbourne Park—as he did against Taylor Fritz on Tuesday—he's gone on to win the title.

The odds are usually stacked against his semifinal rival. Perhaps even more so against fourth-seeded Jannik Sinner, who won a quarterfinal over No. 5 Andrey Rublev that didn't start until 10:42 p.m. and didn't finish until 1:21 a.m. Wednesday.

Djokovic reached his record-extending 48th Grand Slam semifinal by beating Fritz 7-6 (3), 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 in 3 3/4 hours. Their match started late in the heat of the afternoon because U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff's preceding win over Marta Kostyuk took more than three hours.

In an on-court interview with Australian player Nick Kyrgios, who has been sidelined by a long-term injury, Djokovic made a light-hearted joke about getting popcorn and watching Sinner vs. Rublev on late-night TV.

Later, Djokovic said Sinner's late finish wouldn't be a factor in Friday's semifinals.

"What kind of advantage will I have? We have two days. It's not much of an advantage that I see there," he said. "Plenty of time for whoever wins that match tonight to recover."

The start of the night session was pushed back past 9 p.m. and could have gone very, very late if not for women's champion Aryna Sabalenka and Sinner both winning in straight sets.

Sinner was down 5-1 in the second-set tiebreaker before winning six straight points, starting with a stunning crosscourt forehand, to turn momentum and take the match 6-4, 7-6 (5), 6-3.

"I want to thank everyone for staying so long," Sinner said in his on-court interview. "It's always a huge pleasure to play here on this court. It doesn't really matter the time."

Since losing to Djokovic in last year's Wimbledon semifinals, Sinner has won two of his three matches against the 24-time major champion.

"I'm really lucky to face him again (in) one of the biggest tournaments in the world," he said. "Happy I can play the No. 1 in the world. He won here some times!"

Sinner hasn't dropped a set yet.

Djokovic, meanwhile, has spent more time on court through five rounds than ever at Melbourne Park—more than 15 hours—but thinks he's still building into it. He's on a 33-match winning streak at the Australian Open—a tournament record he shares with his childhood inspiration, Monica Seles.

The first game took 16 minutes and the first set lasted 1 hour, 24 minutes. Fritz got the first break of serve and maintained it to win the second set.

"Credit to him for playing really well. You could see that he had a clear game plan. He was really sharp," Djokovic said. "So it was definitely a struggle for me to play the first couple sets.

"In the third, things started to come together. I wasn't serving well at all first two sets, and then third and fourth, great."

Fritz saved the first 15 breakpoints he faced, an impressive stat against one of the best returners ever.

"My conversion was really poor but in the end of the day, I managed to break him when it mattered," Djokovic said.

The first game set the tone for a long, tough match. It contained 24 points, going to deuce nine times.

Then followed the longest first set of the tournament. In the tiebreaker, Djokovic finished a 21-shot rally with a stunning backhand crosscourt winner to get five set points. He put his finger to his ear, nodded his head and blew a kiss toward a commentary box at the rear of the court.

After two tight sets, Fritz was broken in the second game of the third when Djokovic converted his 16th chance. Djokovic broke again, at love, in the ninth game to wrap up the third.

In the fourth, there was an exchange of breaks until Djokovic served it out from 5-3 to improve to 9-0 against Fritz in career head-to-heads.

Fritz said he felt for Sinner and Rublev, and tournament scheduling had come up in the locker rooms after Daniil Medvedev's second-round match didn't start until after 11 p.m. and didn't finish until almost 4 a.m. He said with physio, treatment and wrapping up, it takes hours after the match to get to sleep.

"It ... just screws up your whole clock," Fritz said. "I pray for those guys."

Sinner said there were advantages to playing late, such as the timing for fans watching the broadcast in Italy.

"In my mind I knew if I win I have two days off, which even if you potentially finish very late, you can recover," he said. "But in this moment, you don't watch the clock!"

AP

Novak Djokovic of Serbia reacts during his quarterfinal against Taylor Fritz of the U.S. at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Tuesday, Jan. 23, 2024.

Zverev ousts Alcaraz to move into semis against Medvedev

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—After backhanding the ball into the crowd when Carlos Alcaraz sent his service return too long, Alexander Zverev screamed. He shook both arms in a victory celebration and again he screamed, a mix of triumph and relief.

Any self-doubt that he could contend for major titles again were expunged in a 6-1, 6-3, 6-7 (2), 6-4 quarterfinal win on Wednesday over the brightest rising star in tennis, earning Zverev a spot in the Australian Open semifinals against Daniil Medvedev.

He'd missed a chance to serve it out in straight sets but didn't waste his second opportunity.

A serious ankle injury at the 2022 French Open and the ensuing layoff made him wonder if he really was good enough to win a Grand Slam title.

A pending trial in a German court over an assault allegation dating back to 2020 has had critics questioning his status on the tour. He has denied the accusations and declined comment on the judicial proceedings scheduled for May.

Alcaraz won Wimbledon last year and was the only player to beat 10-time Australian Open winner Novak Djokovic in a Grand Slam match in 2023.

Zverev went through Alcaraz's credentials as he digested Wednesday's win: No. 1 or No. 2 in the world, two major titles, etc, etc.

"Look, I'm playing one of the best players in the world," Zverev said. "Then when you start winning, obviously your brain starts going. It's not always helpful but I'm happy I got it at the end."

Speaking in a news conference at almost 3 a.m. local time, Zverev considered the win over Alcaraz as his most important since the ankle surgery.

"I was on top of my game before the injury happened," he said. "I'm extremely happy to be back where I am and winning these kind of matches, giving myself the chance again. Because last year ... I wasn't a Slam contender."

Alcaraz missed the 2023 Australian Open with injury and was into the quarterfinals here for the first time, completing a Grand Slam set.

He had dropped only one set and spent five fewer hours on court than Zverev in the four previous rounds.

"I'm sad with my level today, because I have been playing good tennis," Alcaraz said. "Obviously quarterfinal of a Grand Slam is a good run. It's not what I'm looking for, but is not bad."

Medvedev, a two-time finalist in Australia, outlasted ninth-seeded Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (4), 2-6, 6-3, 5-7, 6-4 to make it to the semifinals here for the third time in four years.

"I'm so destroyed right now," No. 3-ranked Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open winner, said of his tough run in Melbourne that included a nearly 4 1/2-hour, five-set second-round win that finished at 3:39 a.m.

In the other semifinal Djokovic, on a 33-match winning streak at the Australian Open, will play Jannik Sinner, who beat him twice in three matches at the end of last year.

Zverev was on top of Alcaraz early, winning all but two points on serve in a 29-minute first set. Two service breaks in the second gave the Olympic gold medalist a surprisingly comfortable lead.

Just after midnight, Zverev was serving for a straight sets win at 5-3 when Alcaraz broke for the first time. Alcaraz got back to 5-5 when he chased a shot into the doubles alley and knocked a backhand down the line, beaming a big smile and shaking his racket in a gesture that suggested: "Hello, still here."

He won the last seven points of the tiebreaker to make it 2-1.

But after an exchange of service breaks to open the fourth and some energy-sapping rallies that had both players sprinting side-to-side to make incredible shots, Zverev got another chance to close out after breaking in the ninth game.

He clinched it about 1:20 a.m. local time.

The women's semifinal lineup was completed when No. 12 Zheng Qinwen won 10 of the last 11 games to fend off Anna Kalinskaya 6-7 (4), 6-3, 6-1 on Wednesday and Dayana Yastremska beat Linda Noskova 6-3, 6-4.

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff will meet in the other semifinal.

Zheng, a U.S. Open quarterfinalist last year, regained control after Kalinskaya won six of the last seven points to take the first in a tiebreaker.

"Really excited. First time for me," Zheng said. "Of course I'm proud of myself. But this is just the beginning—I still need to play tomorrow."

No. 93-ranked Yastremska won three matches in the qualifying tournament and became only the second qualifier to reach the women's singles semis in Australia in the Open era.

"It's nice to make history because at that time I was not born," she said. "I'm super happy (but) very tired."

Noskova beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek on her way to her first Slam quarterfinal but struggled against Yastremska.

After the match, Yastremska wrote a message on a TV camera lens and later explained it was "about the Ukrainian fighters, that I'm very proud of them. They really deserve a huge respect."

She said she's inspired by representing her country, which has been at war for nearly two years since the Russian invasion.

"It's my mission here," she said. "If I do well, I can get—tough to express. I'm just trying to give the signal to Ukraine that I'm really proud of it."

By MARK RABAGO
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EDITOR

Abalos tops Round 1 of Aces of Aces tourney

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Participants of the 2023 Fil-Taga Ace of Aces Tournament held last Jan. 13 pose for a group shot at the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan.

July winner Edgar Abalos topped the first round of the season-ending 2023 Fil-Taga Ace of Aces Tournament held last Jan. 13 at the Coral Ocean Resort in Agingan.

The 61-year-old Pacific Islands Club Saipan guest service supervisor shot a net score of 68 after firing a gross of 80 built around a 39 in the front nine and a 41 in the back nine.

Abalos said he's fortunate that his driver and approach shots were working in Day 1 of the yearly tournament, as he's putting completely deserted him two Saturdays ago.

"Putting wasn't working and a lot of my birdie chances didn't go on. It's actually my lowest score for a while and the first time I broke into 80. I used to be a single handicapper when I played a lot, but I lack practice now and seldom play golf anymore," he said in Filipino.

As for the course and weather conditions, Abalos said the weather was fine and as usual the COP is a wide and long course which is advantageous to long strikers like him.

"I want to dedicate the win to my family as always. They always support me in my golf as well as running and biking hobbies," he said.

Coming into tomorrow's Round 2, Abalos said his strategy is to hopefully improve his putting and that his unfamiliarity with the LaoLao Golf & Resort course won't be too much of a hindrance.

"Good luck to Fil-Taga Ace of Aces qualifiers tomorrow," he said.

A stroke back of Abalos for second place on the opening round of the Fil-Taga Ace of Aces tourney was Bert Suda as the alternate for June shot a net 69 on the strength of his 86 gross (43-43), while currently running third is November winner Tom Palikkun who registered a net 70 (79, 40-39).

A total of 17 Fil-Taga members took part in the Jan. 13 competition and the rest of the players are the following with their net scores in parenthesis: William Retardo (71), October's Dad Krishnan (71), Henry Bautista (72), May's Freddie Cataluna (74), December's Adony Matutino (75), defending champion Ruben Avendano (76), Mike Cruz (79), April's Emil Pedernal (79), February's Hak Chon Bae (80), January's Dan Ganacias (80), August's Albert Pajarillaga (81), March's Tony Cabrera (83), September's Ronnie Santos (84), and Joe Miranda (gross 99).

The second round of the 2023 Fil-Taga Ace of Aces Tourney will be held tomorrow at the west course of LaoLao Bay Golf & Resort. The awards banquet will be held in the evening at Lucky Bill's Restaurant in Garapan.

Harbaugh returning to NFL to coach Chargers after leading Michigan to college national title

COSTA MESA, Calif. (AP)—Jim Harbaugh was hired as head coach of the Los Angeles Chargers on Wednesday, leaving Michigan after capping his ninth season as coach of college football's winningest program with the school's first national championship since 1997.

Harbaugh signed a five-year deal a person close to the negotiations told The Associated Press. The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because the Chargers did not announce the terms.

Harbaugh made the highly anticipated decision to go back to the NFL after a second interview and resume his chase for a Super Bowl that eluded him as a quarterback and coach.

He will be the first former Chargers player to return to the team as head coach. He played for the Bolts in 1999-2000 before retiring following the 2001 season.

"My love for Michigan, playing there and coming back to coach there leaves a lasting impact. I'll always be a loyal Wolverine," Harbaugh said in a statement. "I'm remarkably fortunate to have been afforded the privilege of coaching at places where life's journey has created strong personal connections for me. When I played for the Chargers, the Spanos family could not have been more gracious or more welcoming.

"Being back here feels like home, and it's great to see that those things haven't changed."

Harbaugh is the first coach in 26 seasons to win a national title and not return to the school the following season. Nebraska's Tom Osborne retired following the 1997 season after the Cornhuskers split the national title with Michigan.

Los Angeles was looking for a new coach and general manager after Brandon Staley and Tom Telesco were fired on Dec. 15, a day after a 63-21 loss in Las Vegas to the Raiders.

Harbaugh was first asked about possible interest in the Chargers job as his team was preparing for the Rose Bowl, but did comment. He first met with the Chargers on Jan. 15.

Harbaugh was the eighth of 15 coaching candidates to interview with the Spanos family. He was the only one to get a second interview.

The Atlanta Falcons also talked to Harbaugh on Jan. 16 and had booked a second interview before he decided to accept the Chargers job.

"Jim Harbaugh is football personified, and I can think of no one better to lead the Chargers forward," owner Dean Spanos said in a statement while also borrowing from one of Harbaugh's catch phrases. "Who has it better than us?"

The Chargers are the fourth of eight teams to fill their head coach job, following New England, Las Vegas and Tennessee. Atlanta, Carolina, Seattle and Washington remain with an opening.

Harbaugh called Michigan athletic director Warde Manuel to inform him he was leaving to lead the Chargers. Michigan tried to keep Harbaugh, offering him a new six-year contract for $11.5 million per season, according to a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to share details of the deal.

WAZZUP

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ning from a homer, but it wasn't enough to close the gap Wazzup had built. Wazzup, after being down by one in the second, scored four in the third to overtake the lead, 6-3.

They kept adding runs from there as a three-run jack from Chris George cemented a 9-3 lead in the fourth. Wazzup wasn't done yet as they scored four more runs in the fifth and sixth, which was more than enough for the win.

Team Sufa 21, Tuturamz 6

Team Sufa beat Tuturamz repeatedly with their bats as they won, 21-6.

It was over quickly via run-mercy ruling when they scored their 21st run in just the fourth inning. Meanwhile, Tuturamz could only score two in the first, one in the third, and just three in the fourth.

Sufa's ball-magnet bats scorched 13-runs in the third inning alone from two three-run homers by Paul Salalila and Pat Deleon Guerrero, plus multiple runs scored from fielding errors along the way.

Man Amigos 21, Team Redmen 6

The Man Amigos' power of friendship—and their skills with the bat landed them the win against Team Redmen, 21-6.

It was another run-mercy ruled game as the Amigos blasted run after run starting in the second inning. Nine runs came, plus another seven in the third.

The Redmen couldn't even connect with the ball until the fourth inning when they scored six, but at this point, it was too little too late. The Amigos went on to score five more and the game ended soon after that.

Hagu La'Mun 11, Peliliu 1

Hagu La'mun were hungry for runs as they outscored Peliliu, 11-1.

Hagu La'mun pitcher John Acosta didn't really have much to worry about with only one run scored by Peliliu and only four hits against him. It was up to Hagu La'mun's offense to drive it all the way home, and that's what they did.

The bulk of their runs came in the last inning as they scored five consecutive runs—and Peliliu conceded with a 10-run deficit.

Asahi 19, Saipal 2

Asahi beat down on Saipal, 19-2.

It was a fruitful third inning for Asahi as they scored nine runs, with three from Darwin Masaharu's home run.

Another seven runs came in the last three innings and as Saipal could only score two by way of Derek Sasamoto and Chico Ilo, the game ended early.

NMIFA

From page 32

better players, improve the quality of teams, and raise the standard of football throughout Asia.

An MA, like NMIFA, can only offer this type of course if it meets stringent criteria under the Asian Football Confederation Coaching Convention rules and regulations, like having accredited Coach Education Tutors and in this case, NMIFA coaches Michiteru Mita, Angie Ito, and Jersh Angeles.

Mita said it's the first time for NMIFA to offer it and that it's "a critical first step toward the NMIFA's goal of raising the standard of coaching on the island. I encourage the coaches to pass on their knowledge to their players and their fellow coaches. This program involves investment and return. We invest on coaches that have the passion and dedication to bring NMI football to the next level, and as a return, we hope to see coaches continue their commitment to the program and help develop better players and better teams."

NMIFA president Jerry Tan congratulated the seven coaches on completing the course that takes a lot of hard work and commitment. "This course supports the NMIFA's efforts in expanding our coaching capacity and improving our coaching level to meet the growing needs of NMI football. When we started the program, one of our challenges was to recruit players. Today, we have a lot of players and as the program continues to grow, we really need qualified and knowledgeable coaches to guide our players," he said.

He then thanked the Asian Football Confederation, "for the approval and endorsement of the NMIFA 'B' Diploma Coaching Course as it gives us the opportunity and the tools to continue to educate our coaches."

During the last module of the course, a guest speaker, Hide Takahashi, the head coach of the Bhutan Football Association's U20 national team, and a Japanese Football Association dispatched coach and pro license holder, visited Saipan from last Jan. 11 to 18.

DEFENDING

From page 32

to the free throw line. However, they could not deliver from there and wasted free shots. The Dolphins' lead just grew from there with more exceptional ball-handling and strategic plays.

ACS fought valiantly, but MHS remained composed and maintained their lead. Even at the bench's turn on the court, MHS ensured they did not lose the lead their starting five put on the board.

Charlz Sanchez led the Dolphins with 9 markers, Marl Balignasay scored 7, and Andy Jiang, and Marc Tengco put up 6 each.

In other games, Kagman High School bested Saipan International School, 48-24, and Saipan Southern High School defeated Mount Carmel School, 40-30.

MHS 43 – Sanchez 9, Balignasay 7, Jiang 6, Tengco 6, Islam 4, Laquian 4, David 3, Suba 2, Escalada 2.

ACS 22 – Zhang 5, Wang 4, Cui 4, Yang 4, Ma 3, Song 2.

Scoring by halves: 25-7, 43-22.

Pika Run 2024 on Feb. 17 at Tinian Hot Pepper Festival

The Marianas Visitors Authority announces the addition of Pika Run 2024 during the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival on President's Day weekend in The Marianas.

"Pika" means "spicy" in the Chamorro language. The run—featuring a 5K course this year—will start at 6am on Feb. 17 at the Festival Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, and proceed along the historic World War II-era Broadway before returning to the starting point.

Registration is $10. Cash prizes will be awarded in men and women's divisions: $150 for first place, $100 for second place, and $75 for third place. Registration can be made by emailing your name, division, and contact phone number to the MVA office in Saipan at communityprojects@mymarianas.com or calling (670) 664-3200 or by emailing the MVA Tinian office at vborja@mymarianas.com (use subject line: Pika Run). Registration can also be made on race day from 5am to 5:30am at the start line.

LEIGH GASES

Kosuke Sato throws up 3's as he runs into third place in the Run from '23 Mile Race last New Year's Eve at Smiling Cove. Sato and other Saipan-based runners should head on to Tinian for the Pika Run 2024 during the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival next month.

"In cooperation with the Tinian Mayor's Office, we're super excited to add a fun run to this year's 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival," said MVA managing director Christopher A. Concepcion. "It's going to be a great way to start Day 2 of what we locals call Pika Fest—highlighting Tinian's famous "pika" or "spicy" hot pepper, the donne sali. Rise and shine, lace up, and we'll see you at the first Pika Run on Feb. 17!"

The festival will kick off on the evening of Feb. 16 and continue on Feb. 17. The event will be held at the Fiesta Grounds in San Jose, Tinian, adjacent to the picturesque Jones Beach and House of Taga, a U.S. National Historic Landmark featuring limestone monoliths carved by ancient Chamorros.

Docomo Pacific is the Exclusive Pika Sponsor of the 20th Annual Tinian Hot Pepper Festival.

Ferry service is available between Saipan and Tinian for the event. The ferry schedule will be:

- Feb. 16, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 2pm.
- Feb. 17, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 2pm.
- Feb. 18, departing Saipan at 8am and departing Tinian at 4pm.

Ferry round trip cost is $20 for ages 3-11, $50 for ages 12 and older. For one way, the cost is $15 for ages 3-11, $25 for ages 12 and older. Children ages 0-2 are free. Children under age 18 must be accompanied by an adult, and tickets are non-transferable. Advanced ticket purchase is required and will be accommodated on a first come, first served basis. Ticket purchases may be made at the MVA Office in Tinian or Saipan. Cash payments only will be accepted.

Hotel accommodations are nearly sold out. Accommodations on island include Tinian Ocean View, Tinian Diamond Hotel and Casino, Tinian Diamond Suites, Tinian Western Lodge Hotel, Lorilynn's Hotel, Tinian Street Motel, Fleming Hotel, Green Lion House Hotel, Lucky Homes Hotel, and the Marpo Valley Inn. Free camping is available at Jones Beach, Taga Beach (toilets, barbecue pits, and outdoor showers available) and at the adjacent Tachogna Beach (barbecue pits, outdoor showers, and toilets are available).

The *Super Emerald* ferry will depart from the Commonwealth Ports Authority dock in Lower Base, Saipan. Passengers must check in one hour before departure. Each paying customer is allowed one free checked bag and one additional checked bag for $20 for a combined total weight of up to 70 lbs. One household pet of up to 50 lbs. is allowed per paying customer, and thirty-five passengers will be accommodated per ferry.

Contests scheduled for the President's Day weekend event are the Hot Pepper Eating Contest, JC Café Hot Burger Eating Contest, the Estafao Pika (spicy chicken stew) Cooking Contest, a Cha-cha Dance Contest where contestants are encouraged/will be judged on wearing hot pepper-themed attire, and more.

For more information, contact MVA Community Projects specialist Ray Villagomez at rvillagomez@mymarianas.com, Tinian Field Operations supervisor Vida Borja at vborja@mymarianas.com or (670) 433-9365, or the Tinian Mayor's Office at (670) 433-1802. ***(MVA)***

Magic 100.3 drives support for NMC Foundation with $5K in promotional activities

As part of its long-standing commitment to higher education in the CNMI, Radio Station Magic 100.3 recently donated $5,000 in radio advertisements to the Northern Marianas College Foundation for the upcoming Golf Open on March 23 and 24, 2024.

"At Magic 100.3, we're all about amplifying good causes, and we are proud to help the Northern Marianas College and the NMC Foundation," said Magic 100.3 Program director RV Caberos. "We hope other CNMI businesses join in supporting higher education."

NMC's tournament will be a two-day event and the tournament fee for the 2024 golf open is $250.

NMC

Radio Station Magic 100.3 recently donated $5,000 worth of radio advertisements to the Northern Marianas College Foundation to help promote its upcoming Golf Open in March 2024.

"On behalf of NMC's Foundation, I extend our deepest gratitude to Magic 100.3 for turning up the volume on education," said Ben Babauta, chairperson of the NMC Foundation.

The tournament, which is also the signature event of the NMC Foundation, aims to raise funds to build and equip modern, innovative campus facilities that will help expand the CNMI's workforce development efforts, stimulate economic growth, and provide access to quality education for the residents of the CNMI.

Interested companies and individuals who would like to help the college with its rebuilding efforts can donate educational tax credit, cash, or in-kind contributions by visiting www.marianas.edu/golf or by contacting Helen Camacho at helen.camacho@marianas.edu, Raynard Travilla at raynard.travilla@marianas.edu, or Miguel Dandan at miguel.dandan@marianas.edu.

Golfers who would like to register for the upcoming tournament can also visit www.marianas.edu/golf. Only online payments are accepted for this upcoming golf open.

For more updates, follow Northern Marianas College on Facebook and Instagram (nmc.proa) or visit www.marianas.edu. ***(NMC)***

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Giannis records triple-double, Bucks beat Cavs in game after Griffin firing.

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Sports

Pika Run 2024 on Feb. 17 at Tinian Hot Pepper Festival.

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Defending champs MHS starts hoops season strong

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Defending champs Marianas High School Dolphins hit the ground running at the start of the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Wednesday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The Dolphins set the tone for the season as they showcased their dominance on the court with a blowout 43-22 win over the Agape Christian School Torchbearers.

The Dolphin boys in blue, like water, doused the somewhat ignited fire of the Torchbearer boys, in red, with a huge double-digit deficit throughout the game. Agape tried a last-ditch effort to get back at least by 10 points.

It didn't happen though as the Dolphins swam away to the basket and scored at every opportunity that they could, and at the end of the first half, they had a commanding 25-7 lead.

But despite the deficit, the Torchbearers displayed resilience and determination, attempting to close the gap with a flurry of fast-break plays and aggressive drives to the basket by Matthew Zhang and Steve Yang throughout the second half.

Come crunch time with just a few minutes left, fouls were made left and right, with Agape making multiple trips

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LEIGH GASES

Marianas High School's Charlz Sanchez forces himself through for a bank shot between a tight-knit Agape Christian School defense and gets the foul during their season opener of the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League last Wednesday night at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

NMIFA concludes 'B' diploma coaching course

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Northern Mariana Islands Football Association concluded its "B" Diploma Coaching Course that was held from last Jan. 15 to 20 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

NMI'S Russelle Zapanta, Martin Jambor, Ronnel Ocanada, and Christopher Aninzo, along with Guam's Jude Bischoff and Ralph Awa. Last Saturday, they were recognized during an appreciation and closing ceremony at the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan.

The course was divided into four modules and were segmented throughout about six months. The first module was held from last July 6 to 11.

The course was under the Asian Football Confederation Coaching Convention, one program under AFC. It aims to improve the level of coaching through progressive education and practical experience. Through the program, Member Associations develop

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NMIFA

Seven soccer coaches, five from NMI and two from Guam, back row, pose for a photo with Northern Mariana Islands Football Association officials including president Jerry Tan, seated, third from right, during the closing ceremony of the NMIFA "B" Diploma Coaching Course at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan last Saturday.

Wazzup says adios to Tokahao, 13-4

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Wazzup said see you later to Tokahao as they beat them, 13-4, in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association League men's division last Sunday at the Dandan Softball Field.

It was a pretty equal game in the first two innings, with the upper hand to Tokahoa, but Wazzup got into the groove in the third.

Tokahao led 3-2 from runs scored by Bruce Norita, Mark Villagomez, and Clint Quitugua, but they hit a brick wall after that as they just couldn't cut it against Wazzup pitcher Kevin Kapileo.

Geoff Cruz added one on the board for Tokahao in the sixth in-

See WAZZUP on Page 30

LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Tokahao's Manny Villagomez celebrates at home plate during a game in the 2024 Budweiser Belau Amateur Softball Association League men's division at the Dandan Softball Field.